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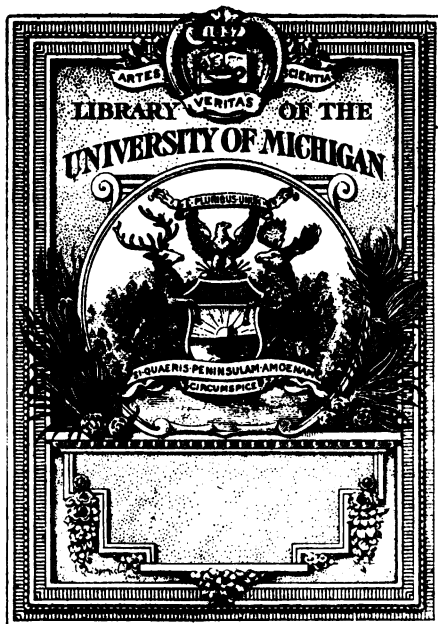
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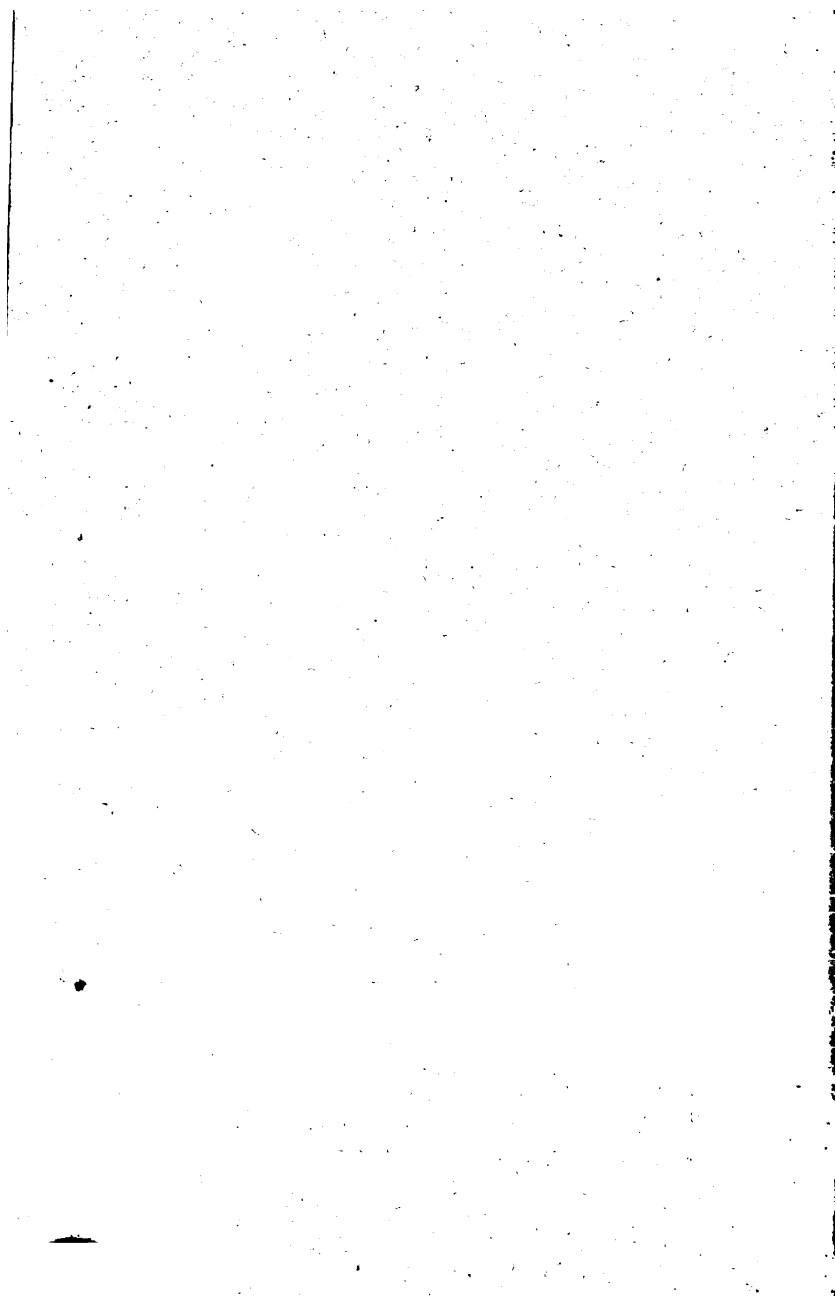
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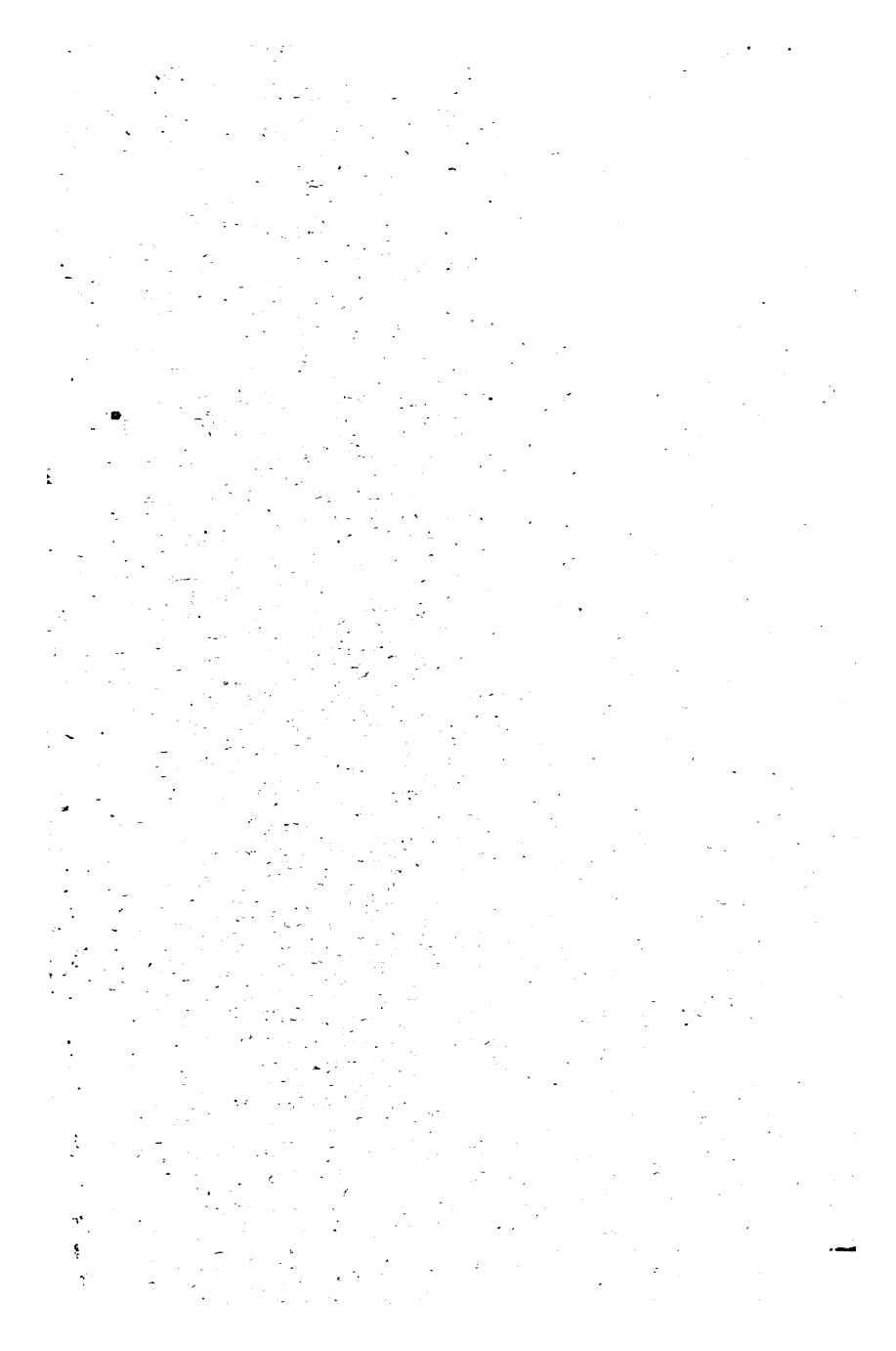
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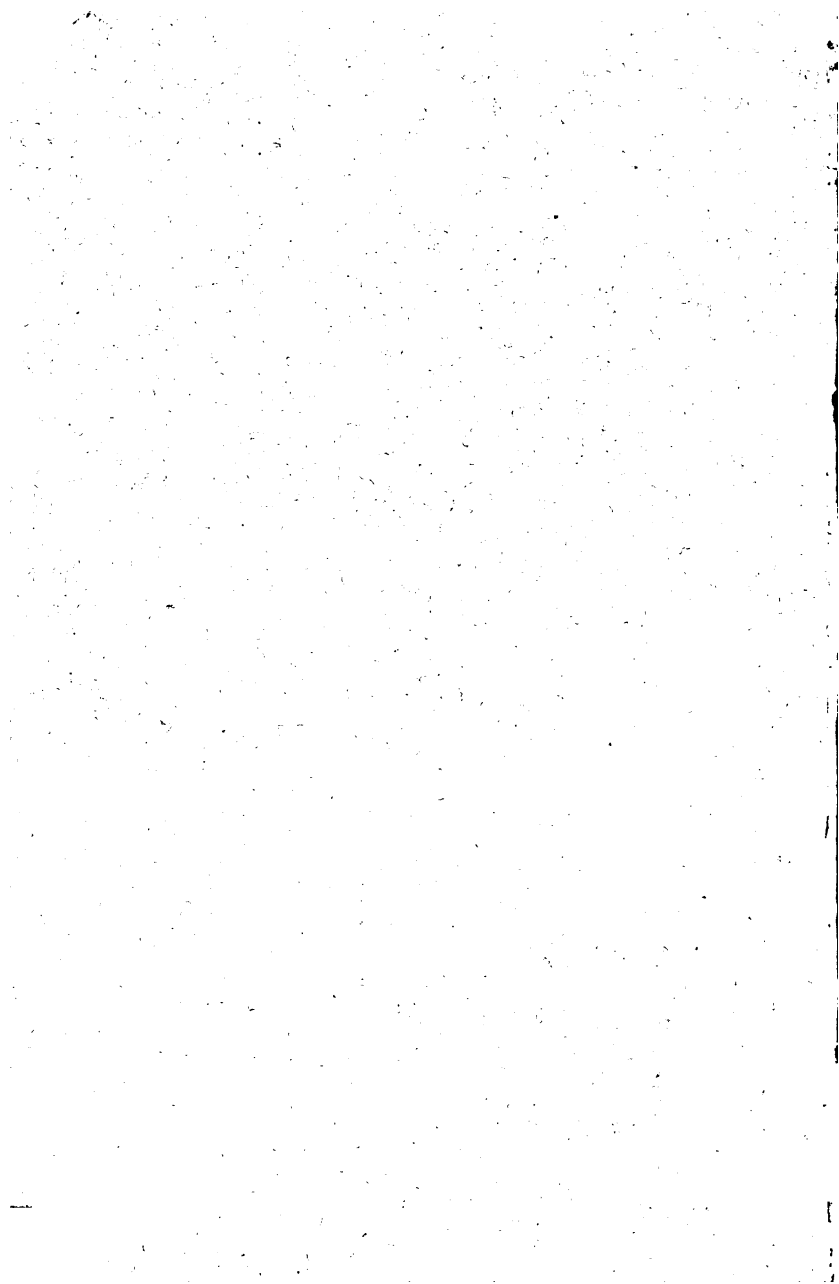


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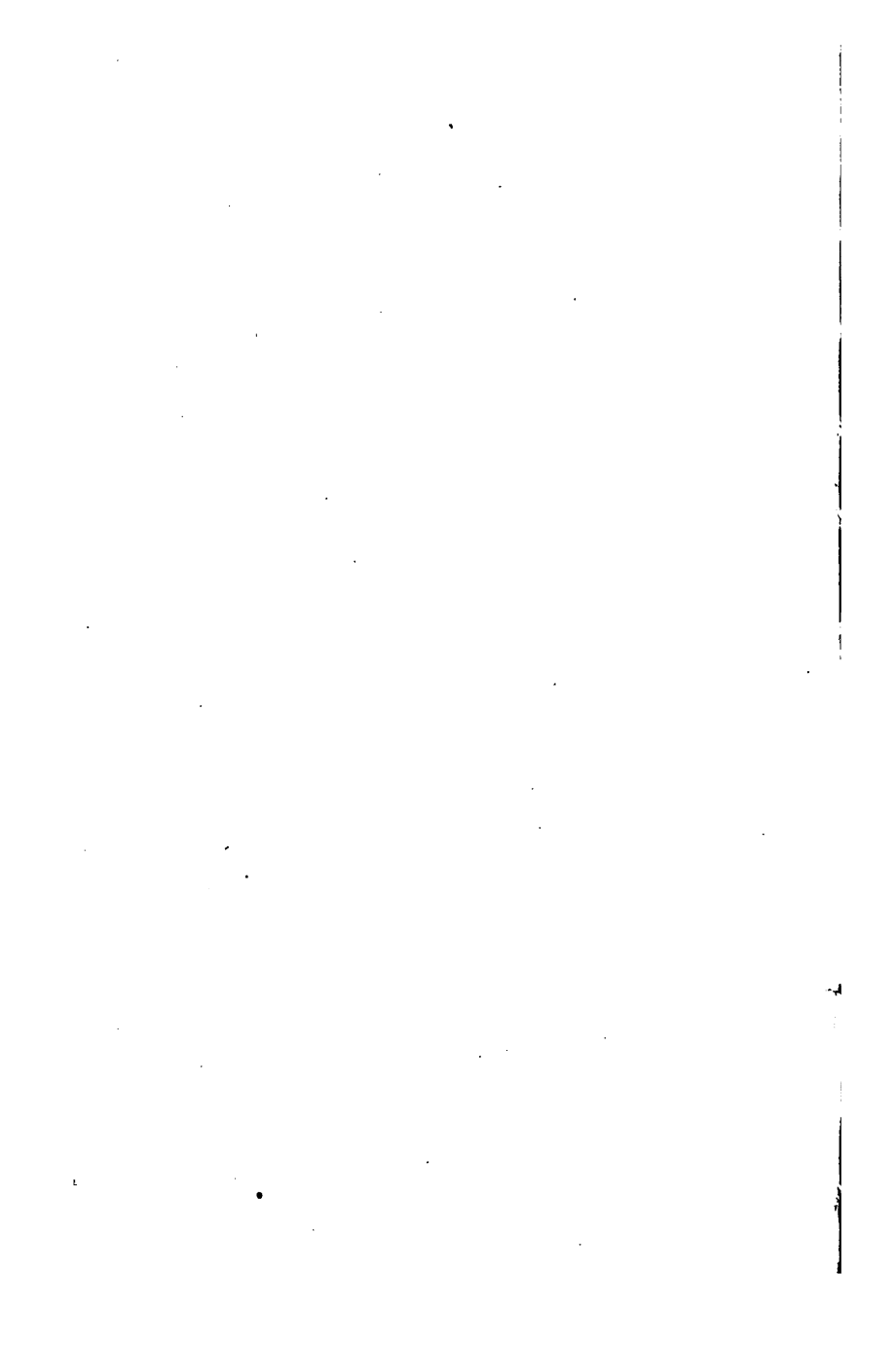
July 1st



THE SORTIE







# THE SON OF A TORY

126013

*A narrative of the Experiences of Wilton  
Aubrey in the Mohawk Valley and  
elsewhere during the Summer of  
1777, now for the first time  
edited by*

CLINTON SCOLLARD

*Author of "A Man-at-Arms," etc.*



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TO HENRY PELOUZE DE FOREST, M. D.

My dear Harry:

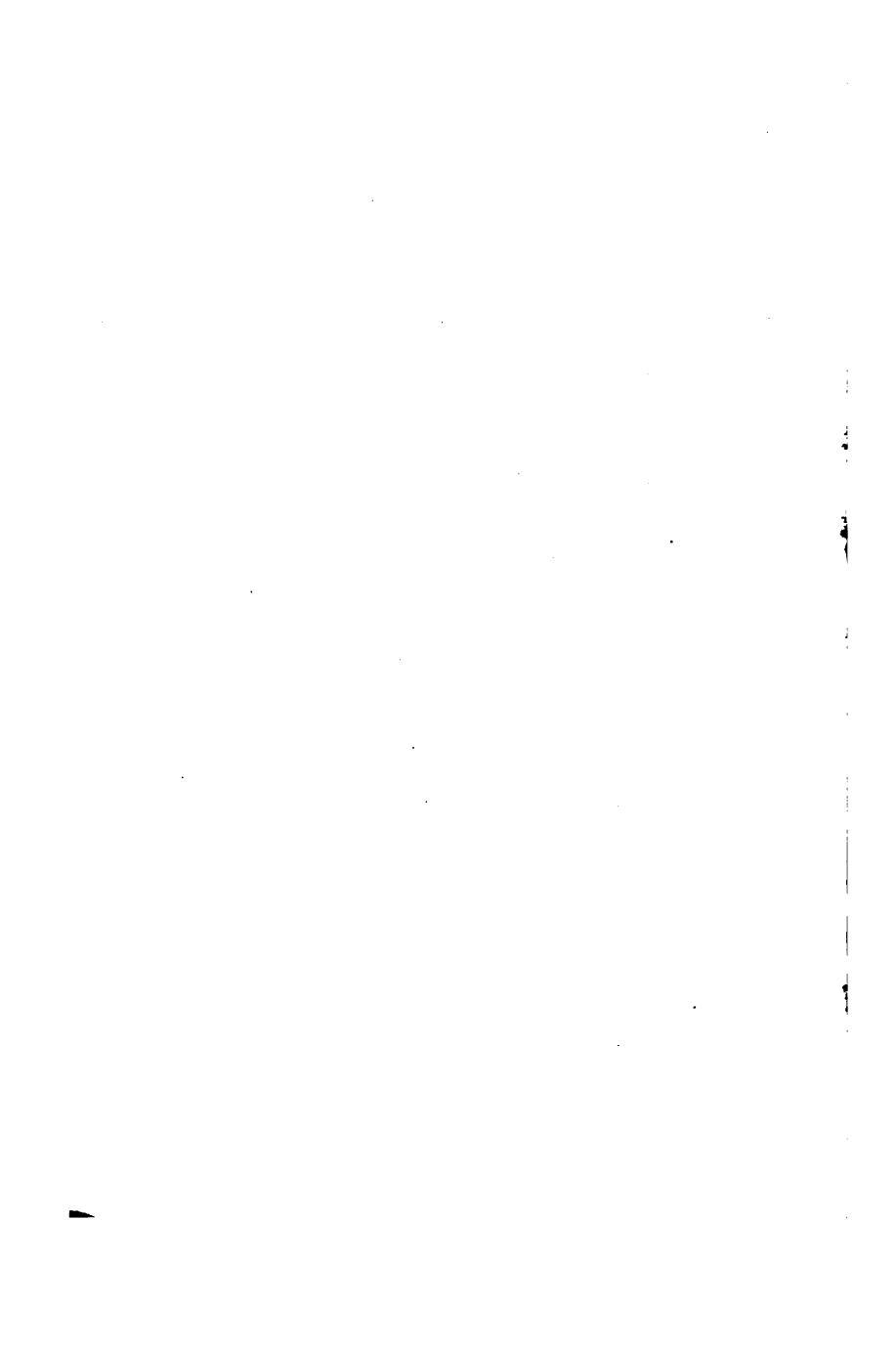
Although it was not your lot, like mine, to be born within far crow-call of the Mohawk Valley, where most of the scenes described in these pages were enacted, yet inasmuch as you have gazed lingeringly with me upon the rich sweep of the river vale I venture here to set your name; but chiefly am I moved to do so because of the good-fellowship and affection that have long been between us.

C. S.



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## FOREWORD

(*Wilton Aubrey to the Reader.*)

She whom I hold dearest in the whole fair round of earth avers that whatever imagination I possess takes wing when I seat myself and put pen to paper. It seems to me that this is rather a severe arraignment of my powers of expression, although I will confess that I have never been enamored of things fanciful. My early law studies, declares the little lady in question, must have stunted, if not altogether destroyed, the tender shoot which otherwise would have sent forth leaf and flower. She is not satisfied, you see, without some plausible explanation for the fact that she so earnestly insists upon. She delights to imagine that I might have been a poet like Mr. Freneau, or a romancer like Brockden Brown, had it not been for "so and so." Ah, doting and transparent one, ever ready to excuse and overlook the shortcomings

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of him whose greatest virtue is his love of thee!

After this preamble, and my frank confession of the opinion of the person who should know me best, you, gracious reader, will expect nothing more than a plain tale, a straight-forward narration of certain happenings that chanced to fall under my cognizance at a time when our beloved land was but a nursling in the family of nations,—she who is now fast growing to such full stature.

There are several reasons I might urge for relating the story of my adventures. One, however, will suffice. The peculiar position in which I was placed gave me exceptional opportunity for observing men and events, men whose names are not likely soon to be forgotten, events which long since became a part of history. For a season an onlooker, I was finally a participant in a campaign the importance of which has never been fully realized. That I should shed upon it any new light is exceedingly improbable; the most that I can

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hope to do is, through the fact of personal contact, to give to it a slight added touch of reality.



## CHAPTER I

### *News from the North*

I had just come in, weary and heated, from assisting David in the fields, had cast myself upon the settle, and taken up a copy of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, fresh from London, when my father entered the room. His wig was awry, a bright spot burned upon either cheek, and his whole manner betrayed unwonted excitement. I knew him too well to rouse him further by noticing these indications of agitation, and greeted him with what calmness I could summon.

"Everything is doing remarkably well," I said. "David thinks he never saw a finer growth of corn and grain."

Either he deemed my remark too trivial to call for a reply, or was too much occupied with what was passing in his own mind to heed my observation. He at once broke out:

"I've great news, Wilton, great news!"

Then lowering his voice to a whisper, and thrusting his head forward in so unnatural a fashion that a momentary thrill of apprehension shot through me lest the tidings he spoke of had unbalanced him, he continued,

“There’s to be an invasion from the north. The time’s come, my boy. We must remain inactive no longer. We must be off and join our friends.”

I had often pictured to myself how I should meet this decision, so long expected and so dreaded. I had rehearsed again and again what remonstrances I should offer. I had imagined with what eloquence I should stand out against it. But now that the words were in my ears I could only say, and that lamely enough,

“Think of your health, sir!”

However strongly other feelings entered into the matter, everything was subordinate to that consideration. I did not even have the least curiosity in regard to the source of the remarkable information he had communicated.

"The news has given me new life," was my father's answer to my expostulation, and for the time he certainly did look ten years younger than was his wont.

Shaking with excitement, his voice still suppressed as though he feared to take even the walls of the room into his confidence, he now revealed to me how he had come into possession of the stirring tidings.

It appeared that while walking in his favorite path at the top of the apple orchard early that afternoon he had been attracted by a slight rustling in the elder bushes surrounding a stump at a point where the path bent away across the great meadow toward the Flatts. On approaching the bushes he discovered an Indian hidden among them. The concealed red-skin signed that he had something to communicate, so my father went among the shrubbery, seated himself upon the stump, and listened to the Indian's story. The man proved to be a runner in the employ of Sir John Johnson, and was bearing news to certain trusted persons of Tory

persuasion farther down the valley of the coming of the baronet and others from Quebec and Montreal. He had been ordered to stop upon his way and urge my father to join the invading force at Buck Island, near the entrance to the St. Lawrence, where a rendezvous had been planned for early July. The runner stated that it had been the intention of the leaders to get the expedition under way from Lachine on the 21st of June. It was now the 30th.

"Imagine my delight, Wilton," cried my father, regaining his natural manner as he closed the Indian's narrative, "to discover, when I inquired if the baronet were at the head of the invasion, that the commander-in-chief is Barry St. Leger!"

This intelligence was a keen blow to me, for I now saw that all attempts to dissuade my father from setting out to join the invaders were likely to be useless. I had thought, while he was relating the runner's story, that perhaps after the heat of enthusiasm had died away he would



listen to my arguments in favor of remaining quietly at home, and possibly finally be persuaded that this was the course of wisdom. The introduction of St. Leger's name put a different face upon the whole matter. My father and St. Leger had been close friends at Cambridge, and mess-mates later, before the health of the former had compelled him to give up the army. The two had not seen one another for twenty years, yet my father preserved the liveliest affection for his college companion, and he, if his occasional letters were to be believed, still held in kindly recollection their youthful comradeship.

Rumors of Burgoyne's advance had reached us, but the runner's message was our first intimation of the intended descent of a second armament. Being for a moment too downhearted to act the part I had previously determined upon in case affairs took an ill turn, I sat speechless and vacant-eyed. My father attributed my silence and dejection to my disapproval of his project on the ground of his health,

and began striding about the room as though to convince me of his vigor, saying as he did so :

“ You have urged me of late, Wilton, to take a journey, declaring that a change would be of benefit to me. What more admirable opportunity than this ? Bethink you, moreover, of the pleasure of meeting the dearest friend of my youth, and of marching triumphantly down our valley, after giving these rascally rebels the trouncing they so richly deserve ! ”

“ In the meanwhile — ” I began.

“ In the meanwhile, ” said my father, catching my thought, and taking the words from my mouth, “ David and Christina can watch over our interests here. We can give out that family matters call us to New York, slip away under the cover of night, and our inquisitive neighbors who term themselves ‘ patriots ’ will never be the wiser until St. Leger’s victorious forces come down upon them — though by that time their courage will no doubt have oozed out and they be swearing fealty to King George. ”

I saw how futile it was to make the slightest demur, so answered with the best grace I could feign :

"It shall be as you wish, sir. When shall we start?"

"We should hardly be in time for the Buck Island rendezvous," replied my father, "so we need not hasten. We can easily make Oswego in five days."

He moved toward the door of the small room he had occupied since my mother's death. His manner indicated that he still had something to tell me, and I wondered what should cause him to hesitate. At the door he turned, and, casting a deprecating look at me, said :

"You may as well know before we leave that there are to be Indians."

"Indians!" I echoed, but he was gone before I could speak further. He was fully aware of my opinion of the policy employed by the crown of enlisting the redskins in the conflict, for on this point I had been outspoken, however carefully I had veiled many of my other sentiments,

and it was his desire to escape an outbreak on my part that led him to withdraw so hurriedly.

The atmosphere of the room seemed suddenly to oppress me, so I seized my hat and strode out into the air. In the rear of the house the ground rose to a gentle eminence where three majestic pine trees had been left standing when the place was cleared. Here I had constructed a rough but comfortable seat, and thither I now repaired. There was yet some time to elapse ere the supper hour, and I was glad of the opportunity for thought thus afforded me.

The sun was fully two hours high above the western hills, and as I sat beneath the stately trees the wide sweep of the valley lay before me like a great garden. A strip of woodland hid the houses of the Flatts, but a thin spiral of smoke indicated their location. It was upon this scene of pastoral peace that the forces of St. Leger and Sir John Johnson, with their attendant horde of savages, were about to descend.

Though I had never been myself an eye-witness of an Indian raid, there were plenty in the vicinity who knew but too well what it meant, and as I now recalled what I had heard from their lips I grew sick at heart. Such fighting did not mean war ; it was sheer butchery. Could I consent to link my fortunes with men who seemed in my eyes little better than murderers ? The suggestion was scarcely endurable. My father looked upon the employment of the Indians much in the same light as I did, but his loyalty to the king kept him silent. Should I take a decided stand, speak out my whole mind, and refuse to go, what then ? A result still more harrowing than participation in the prospective invasion confronted me — my father's grief, and rage, and the sure effect on him consequent upon these emotions. At this juncture I bethought me of my promise to my mother, and henceforward there was no faltering. I looked Duty unswervingly in the eyes, and called him brother, though truly he was a grim companion to take to one's bosom.

It may appear strange that my sentiments and those of my father differed so radically. This perhaps may be best accounted for by the fact that I had been separated from him during some of the most susceptible years of my youth, and had come under the influence of strong characters, men whose views were directly opposed to those which he held. The fortunes of my family had been somewhat checkered. My father was a younger son who had inherited considerable property from a maiden aunt, and had thus been able to follow his own wishes and marry young, indeed, almost immediately on leaving the university. When ill health had forced him to give up his military career he had followed two of my mother's brothers to the colonies. Finding renewed vigor in the change of climate, he embarked in business in New York and devoted himself with varying success to mercantile pursuits until the spring of 1772, when there came a sudden crash in the financial world. My father saved little from the general

wreck save what he had been accustomed jestingly to refer to as his "plantation in the wilderness," a partially cleared tract of land to which he had taken a fancy while delayed for a day on a journey through the interior to Montreal, and which he had acquired for a nominal sum. To this, our present home, he had moved the summer following his business misfortunes.

At the time of my father's reverses I was about completing my first year at King's College, and one of my uncles, fancying he saw in me the making of a lawyer, generously offered to be responsible for the completion of my education. Consequently I had remained behind when my parents turned their backs on civilization. During the three years and a half that elapsed before circumstances forced me to take permanent leave of New York I saw my father but once. This was the formative period of my life. My uncle was a man of but few words, yet he thought and felt deeply. His sympathies were strongly with the colonies when serious difficulties

began to arise with the mother country, and though he never strove to influence me he did so unconsciously.

It was, however, my intimacy with Alexander Hamilton that had the greatest effect in molding my opinions. Hamilton was one of my fellow-students at King's College, and we were drawn toward one another at our first meeting. Although he was several years my junior he was vastly my superior mentally, and the way he grasped a subject was to me a matter of never-ceasing wonder and admiration. He, on the other hand, though full of nervous energy was lacking in physical strength, and often spoke with smiling envy of my prowess in all tests where muscular power and endurance were called into play. Especially was he enthusiastic over my skill at sword-play, an exercise in which I had practised from early boyhood with my father, who had once been the champion fencer of his regiment. When Hamilton became interested in the cause of the colonies he drew me headlong after



him. Boy though he was at the time, and even more youthful in appearance than in actuality, his arguments seemed to me incontrovertible, as indeed they did a little later when I began to think for myself. I was by his side in the tea affair when Captain Chambers' chests were tumbled into the waters of the harbor, and I was with him, and other students as well, the night the cannon were removed from the Battery in face of the shotted guns of the war-ship *Asia*.

But my residence with my uncle and my intercourse with Hamilton were suddenly cut short by news of my mother's serious illness. This was in the autumn of 1775, soon after I had begun my law studies. I traveled with all haste into the country, to find that she had rallied, but was never likely to be in firm health again, if indeed she survived the winter. This fact made my return to New York impossible, so I settled down in our new home to aid in caring for my mother, and to be of what service I could in looking after affairs

about the place. The open warfare which was now in progress between the United Colonies and Great Britain kept my father in a state of feverish excitement, and had it not been for my mother's precarious condition I am sure nothing would have prevented him from offering his services to the crown. As it was, living in a neighborhood where the Whig sentiment was pronounced, his unrestrained speech made him an object of dislike, if not of hatred.

The part I was forced to act was exceedingly distasteful. I made known my feelings to my mother, who, I found, sympathized with me, and counseled me most wisely in regard to my attitude toward my father, whose intense loyalty to the king she understood, and persuaded me was but natural. Though I did not change at heart, as time passed it grew more easy for me to dissimulate, and my father never had cause to suspect my real sentiments. It was entirely owing to my mother's advice and entreaties, however, that he and I came to no bitter words during the months

directly following my arrival. At the Flatts, where I made few acquaintances, I passed among Whigs for a Whig-hater and among Tories as one of their own number, not through any expression on my part but because it was so well known where my father stood. There were but two persons besides my mother who were aware of my actual position.

My mother endured the winter far better than we had feared and we grew quite hopeful during the spring and summer, but with the dull and dark autumn days came a sudden change for the worse and she sank rapidly. During the last weeks of her life I was almost constantly at her side, and it was then I promised her that whatever course my father might pursue in regard to the struggle after she was gone I would not desert him. Under no other circumstances could I, or would I, have given such a promise; yet, situated as I was, who will say that I should have acted otherwise? The entreaty in a dying mother's eyes is something no son, possess-

ing a spark of tenderness or love in his soul, can resist.

It was mid-November when we buried my mother. The frost had made the bare ground as rigid as iron, there was not a breath of wind, and all day long a flock of crows raised a raucous clamor in the pines behind the house. My father was completely broken with grief. Throughout my mother's illness he had refused to allow himself to consider what the end must be, and the final blow seemed to prostrate him quite as much as though it had been unexpected. The day following the burial he was seized with a severe chill; then a racking cough, a trouble from which he had for years been free, took hold upon him and would not be shaken off. It was well-nigh impossible to rouse him from the gloom into which he had fallen, and it seemed as though fate was likely to press the cup of sorrow to my lips a second time. This, however, I was spared, but the effect of the awful depression and desolation of that winter was long in lifting from my spirits.

When my father again began to show an interest in the progress of the war it was like a faint rift in the brooding clouds. In April he went several times to the Flatts, and received a few of his acquaintances among the Tories. Then he expressed an eagerness to regain his strength, and very soon it dawned upon me what was in his mind—flight to Canada and enlistment in the king's cause. The cough still clung to him, and in May an injudicious overexertion brought on a slight hemorrhage, but from this he quickly recovered. His intention became daily more clear, though when he hinted at it I made no effort to conceal my disapproval, never giving him occasion to think, however, that my sympathies in the struggle were opposed to his. But there had been no occurrence to precipitate action on his part until the information of the runner furnished the lacking pretext.

## CHAPTER II

### *What Happened on Muster Night*

“**W**ILTON,” said my father, as we rose from the supper table, “Van Eyck has a small *bateau* which would be just the thing for our journey. Would it not be well to secure it without delay?”

“I think it would,” I replied, “if go we must.”

To the last words of my answer my father paid no heed, for he continued,

“You could find Van Eyck this evening, could you not?”

“Very probably.”

“Suppose you try to. Once we are sure of our boat we can make the other necessary arrangements at our leisure.”

After a brief discussion in regard to what price we ought to pay for the *bateau*, since it seemed best to buy it outright, I took up a stout walking-stick and set out for the

cabin of the eccentric Dutch Tory, which stood not far from the river-bank, near the rift which bore his name.

I must confess that I started upon my errand with considerable misgiving. It was muster night at the Flatts, and in order to reach my destination I was obliged to pass the parade-ground, and also Bellingher's store, which was a general meeting-place after the drill was finished. An encounter with the patriot militia-men was little to my liking, for I knew many of them bore me no good will on account of the views which they assumed I held. It was not that I was timid-hearted and feared personal violence, or cared a jot for any of the jibes they might fling at me, but I detested a brawl, and I was sure there were those who would ask nothing better than to involve me in one. Comforting myself with the thought that it was useless to borrow trouble, and trusting in fortune to see me through without any unpleasantness, I struck into a brisk pace, and was soon beyond the wood which hid the Flatts from view.

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Circumstances favored me, for when I drew near the fort and the parade-ground I found the drill was in full swing. Quite a crowd had assembled to witness the maneuvers, which were in charge of one of the officers from the regular troops stationed at the fort, and I slipped by unnoticed. My spirits now rose, for I reflected that I would wait until after dusk had fallen before returning, and thus lessen the chance of a disagreeable encounter.

I did not find Van Eyck at his cabin, and sat long in the gathering twilight waiting for him. As time elapsed I grew nervous, for I was anxious to take advantage of the darkness before the moon rose; but the moments sped, and still there was no sign of him, and before he finally appeared the moon was silvering the hilltops and the valley. It did not take us long to come to an agreement in regard to the *bateau*, and I left the Tory with the understanding that he was to conceal the boat among a clump of willows at the mouth of a creek about a quarter of a mile up the river, where we



could load her secretly and at our convenience.

Thus far I had every cause to congratulate myself, and in spite of the fact that the moonlight was unusually brilliant I turned homeward with a springing step. As I approached the Flatts I began to encounter militia-men with shouldered muskets. Many of them did not recognize me, and those who did gave me a surly greeting. When I drew near Bellinger's store I saw several groups by the roadside, but managed to get by them without exciting comment. If I could but pass Bellinger's without having my progress arrested I knew I had nothing further to fear.

I might have taken to the fields where a fork leading up the valley joined the main road, but there was a nasty bit of marsh to cross if I did this, and furthermore, while I desired to avoid being noticed, I would not play the part of a sneak and a coward.

Seated upon the steps of the store were perhaps a dozen men, laughing and badger-

ing one another, while half as many in a knot opposite were engaged in more serious conversation. The road was wide, and just before reaching the two groups I left the foot-path and struck into the center of the highway. This was doubtless a foolish move, for I might have slipped past those who were conferring earnestly without attracting their attention, and those opposite could hardly, at that distance, have detected who I was. However, my evident desire to escape recognition drew upon me the eyes of the latter. I realized this, and strove to appear wholly unconcerned, restraining a natural impulse to quicken my stride. I had nearly run the gauntlet when some one on the side of Bellinger's cried out shrilly :

“A Tory! A Tory!”

Should I take to my heels? I acknowledge the thought flashed into my head, and had I acted without an instant's hesitation I doubt not I could have got off without difficulty, for the way was clear, I should have had a fair start, and it took a man of

no mean speed and endurance to catch me in those days. But I put the thought of flight out of my mind, and held to the same pace as before, without noticing the outcry. Other voices immediately caught up the shout, and then two men from the smaller group ran toward me, stretching out their muskets with the intention of barring my way. I managed to elude them only to be confronted by several from Bellinger's.

"I have no quarrel with you, gentlemen," I said pleasantly; "be kind enough to let me pass."

To my request there was no answer. One fellow jostled me and then another, yet I kept my temper, making my way among them, though not without considerable trouble, to the foot-path. Here I was pushed and shoved amid scoffs and jeers, a part of the abuse being in German, which was quite as common as English at the Flatts. Finally their insults became so offensive that my store of patience was exhausted, and seeing a favorable oppor-

tunity I suddenly knocked a great hulking lout from in front of me, and sprang into the angle made by the jutting wing of an old log cabin. Here I faced my tormentors, gripping my walking-stick menacingly. For a moment they were speechless at my unexpected action. When they had intercepted me there had been no concerted plan among them, and probably no intention beyond a thought to annoy me. Now, however, when they recovered from their surprise, there were suggestions in plenty.

“Wig him!” yelled one.

“A rail for him!” called another.

“Duck him! duck him!” clamored a third, at which there was a storm of approval, and there rose a great outcry,—  
“To the river! to the river!”

I set my teeth together and made up my mind that there should be some broken heads before they laid hands upon me, although I realized that, if attacked, I must soon be overpowered. Yet my position was not without its advantages, inasmuch as my assailants were standing in the full

flood of the moonlight, while I was in the shadow. The shouts continued, and I could see that those nearest me were preparing for a sudden rush, when a newcomer pushed his way to the front and demanded in a tone of authority:

“What’s all this uproar about?”

“We’ve caged a Tory and we’re going to duck him,” some one answered.

He turned and peered into the obscurity where I stood, starting back as he recognized my face. It was John Demooth, a lieutenant in the militia, my only intimate friend at the Flatts, one who knew and respected my position. If it were possible for any one to rescue me from my present predicament it was he.

“You, Aubrey!” he exclaimed in surprise. I noted, too, that there was an unusual touch of gravity in his voice.

Suddenly he faced those about him.

“Who says this man’s a Tory?” he demanded. “Which one of you has ever heard him utter Tory sentiments?”

There was a murmur, but no direct response.

"He's his father's son, isn't he?" called a voice at the edge of the crowd, and the sally was greeted by a hilarious outburst.

"Let him cheer for General Washington if he wants to save his hide from a wetting," cried one, and the suggestion seemed to meet with universal approbation.

"Yes, let him cheer," echoed the many.

Even had there not been my father to consider (and how swiftly would the news have been carried to his ears had I yielded to their demands!) I think nothing under heaven would have wrung the cheers from me at that moment, so thoroughly was my obstinacy aroused, though under some circumstances it would have given me the greatest pleasure to shout for General Washington, who was ever in my eyes the perfection of a gentleman and a soldier.

What would have now occurred I cannot conjecture, had not a more personal turn been given to the affair by the appearance of Heinrich Herborn upon the scene.

Between Herborn and myself there was bad blood. At the house of the Demooths,

one winter evening six months earlier, a chance introduction had made me acquainted with Herborn's half-sister. I had been charmed by her naive manner, her freshness as of the wild flower, her modest beauty, and had sought every occasion that offered to see more of her. Every time I looked upon the delicate flush of her cheeks I seemed to see again the first spray I had ever found of that fragrant spring wilding, the arbutus. It was growing at the edge of a bank of snow, and its faint pink against the colorless background appeared to deepen as I gazed upon it. The maiden's eyes had golden lights at times, and her brown hair rippled into little waves like water stirred by a wooing wind out of the south.

I discovered that she came often to visit Miss Demooth, and frequently contrived to time my calls so that we met beneath my friend's hospitable roof. From Margaret Wells, for such was the name of this frontier blossom, I gradually learned her family history. Her mother, a German woman of

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gentle birth, had married, against the wishes of her parents, an impecunious nobleman who had been driven by stress of circumstances to seek his fortune in America, drifting to the Flatts with others of his countrymen. This was Herborn's father, the prefix *von* having been detached from the name when its owner deserted the fatherland. Two years after the death of her first husband Margaret's mother had married again, her second choice being a roving Englishman named Wells whom fate had cast at her door sick with a fever. Left again a widow, she had since managed with the assistance of her son, at the time of his stepfather's death a stalwart youth of nineteen, to carry on their by this time considerable estate.

Young Herborn, now twenty-seven, was two years my senior. Dark and massively built, he was at heart a capital fellow, but such a rabid Tory-hater that he often allowed his feelings to get the better of his good sense. When, at Margaret's invitation, I had called upon her one evening



late in the winter, I was politely received by her mother, who was a woman of most lovable nature, but met with so chilling a reception from her brother that I mentally resolved that it would be long before he had another occasion to treat me so rudely. Encountering him a few days later, he told me plainly that I need not repeat my visit, and that he should resent any of my further attentions to his sister. Fearing that an open quarrel might put an end to all intercourse between myself and Margaret, I pocketed my pride and made him an evasive yet courteous answer.

This episode instead of checking the growing intimacy between Miss Wells and myself tended rather to increase it. As she was a girl of spirit, she naturally resented what she deemed her brother's unwarranted interference. We continued to meet at the Demooth's, and I soon knew her well enough to feel that I could confide to her the secret of my present attitude in regard to the struggle that was in progress. Not long afterward I seized upon a happy

occasion to reveal to her something that was much nearer to my heart, and the joy, not unmixed with surprise, that was mine to find myself suddenly her accepted lover lifted me for the moment to the very crest of happiness. However, the harmony to which earth just then seemed attuned had for us both its discords. Until there was some decisive turn in the conflict our love must be kept concealed. Her brother and my father had to be reckoned with.

Two months passed before I again met Herborn face to face. One afternoon in mid-June, as I was returning from an excursion on horseback down the river road, I came upon him unexpectedly by the wayside talking with a settler whose house stood not far distant. His brow contracted ominously when he saw me, and he moved toward me with so angry an air that I half expected he would attempt to drag me from my horse. He offered me no violence, however, but said, his voice trembling with passion, yet so low that the other could not catch his words:

"I hear, you damned Tory whelp, that you have paid no heed to my warning of last winter. Bear in mind, there'll be a day of reckoning, and that soon!"

This threat uttered, he turned his back upon me, and I rode on without replying.

Now, as the crowd made way for him, and he confronted me, I recalled his words of two weeks previous, and realized that however grave the situation had been before his arrival, his presence had made it infinitely more serious. Cheers for General Washington, provided I were willing to give them, would hardly satisfy him.

"Caught like the contemptible cur you are!" he cried in a most insulting way.

Demooth endeavored to intervene, but Herborn thrust him aside, saying as he did so :

"What! are you turned Tory, John Demooth?"

Seeing Herborn's disposal to deal with me single-handed, the crowd drew back and we were left glaring at each other.

"Will you come out of your hole and

take a thrashing like a man or stay there and take it like a cur?" he demanded.

"Do you mean that you wish to fight me?"

"That is exactly what I mean!"

I threw down my walking-stick and strode toward him. He carried no arms, nor did I, and I knew that he meant a fight with bare fists.

"Choose your own place," I said calmly, "I am ready."

I saw my cool manner of accepting his proposal somewhat took aback many of my assailants; Herborn himself could not conceal his surprise. But in reality it showed no special evidence of bravery on my part. It was simply the easiest way out of what had become a most embarrassing situation. Herborn was heavier and stronger than I, but I had agility and greater length of arm in my favor. He was evidently confident that he was about to inflict a severe chastisement upon me, yet I did not fear him in the least.

The place which he selected for our en-

counter was a grassy plot in the street almost directly in front of Bellinger's store. The night was so warm that I had thrown on only a loose jacket before leaving home; this I now handed to John Demooth, who had joined me, and stood ready to meet my opponent. Herborn divested himself of his rough working coat and bared his arms, on which the muscles were tensely knotted. About us the men formed a broken ring.

My safety depended upon my preventing my antagonist from closing with me. If at the outset he got me into his clutches I knew I should be at his mercy. For some moments I managed adroitly to evade his fierce attack, assuming entirely a defensive attitude, and ere long his rising anger began to tell in my favor. Presently he gave way to a black rage; his lips twitched, and his eyes burned with a vicious light. He taunted me with an oath, saying that I did not dare strike him, and with that flung himself upon me so fiercely that I was all but overwhelmed. I realized that

the time had come for a change of tactics, and swung at him swiftly with an upper cut that caught him under the chin and brought his teeth together with a snap. As he sprang quickly to one side, evidently expecting me to follow up the attack, I saw my opportunity.

Had I been pitted against another I might have hesitated, but this man had treated me most shamefully, had needlessly insulted me, and I felt not an atom of compunction in taking any and every advantage of him.

An unknown hand, a moment before, had struck up a blaze in a flashing lantern that hung above the store doorway. I realized that if its rays fell full upon the countenance the eyes must be, for an instant, dazed. Nimbly shifting my position, before Herborn suspected my intention I had him facing the flaring glow. Then I gathered all my strength — the energy which I had held in reserve — and leaped upon him. Feinting, to add to his confusion, I got by his guard, and fetched him such a swinging

buffet behind the ear that he toppled over an almost dead weight, his head striking upon a rock half concealed by the grass. He strove to rise, but sank back gasping, and in a breath half a dozen or more of those about us were bending over him. As I stepped aside Demooth seized my arm, forced my jacket into my hands, and said, as he pushed me from him :

“Now’s your chance! Be off!”

I needed no second bidding. The words had scarcely left his lips before I was away, accordingly I had a good start before my flight was observed. There was an outcry, but little pretense of pursuit, so I halted, when I had put half a hundred yards between myself and the scene of my victory, to watch Herborn, who had got upon his feet, stagger toward Bellinger’s supported by two of his companions.

It was in vain that I strove to compose my appearance as I neared home so as not to attract my father’s attention. He had become uneasy at my long delay, and the moment I entered the dining-room, where

we commonly sat in the evening, he scanned me narrowly, while questions and exclamations of astonishment leaped from his lips. I took one of the candles from the table and examined my face in the glass. Then I was not surprised at his loud expressions of amazement. There was a bruise upon my forehead, an ugly dark look beneath one of my eyes, an unnatural flush upon my countenance, — all of which went to show that I had very lately experienced some decidedly rough handling.

Much as I disliked to do so, knowing how my father's rage was likely to be aroused, I perceived that the easiest way out of the dilemma was to tell him the whole story. Accordingly I seated myself and rehearsed the occurrences of the evening. Fortunately he did not question me in regard to Herborn's reason for wishing to fight, else I might have found it difficult to give a satisfactory reply and yet keep my secret. He took the rehearsal of my adventure much more calmly than I had anticipated, remarking pointedly that I



must now see the impossibility of remaining longer in the neighborhood, a conclusion in which I was forced to agree with him.

We had just begun to discuss plans for our departure when we heard hurried steps without, the door at the side was thrown open, and David sprang into the room. He was well nigh breathless, and shaking with apprehension.

"Quick!" he gasped, "by the rear of the house! Run for the cabin in the woods. They are coming from the Flatts, a score or more, and they swear they will hunt you out of the country."

I saw by the faithful fellow's manner that there was not an instant to be lost. Catching up a blanket and my father's old army cloak, and thrusting a pair of pistols into my pockets, I hastened my bewildered and enraged parent into the kitchen and toward the rear door of the shed. David called after us, as we ran in the direction of the clustering pines, that he would keep off the Whigs until we had had ample opportunity to reach the woods.

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The door closed and we heard the bar drop into its place. While we paused in the shadow of the trees to get breath we saw plainly, in the moonlight, three forms appear suddenly at one corner of the house, and we knew that in another moment the place would be surrounded.

## CHAPTER III

### *The Tryst*

**H**ALF a mile back among the hills, reached by a partially overgrown trail, stood a small cabin that had been used ten years earlier by men engaged in getting out logs. Thither we now bent our steps. My encounter with Herborn had brought matters to an unexpected pass, and it was clear that we must start Oswego-ward at the earliest possible opportunity. In the meanwhile it seemed best that we should remain in concealment. The cabin in the forest would afford an admirable hiding-place, for it was known to very few at the Flatts, and we should feel perfectly safe in tarrying there until the necessary arrangements for our departure could be made.

The moon rode high, so we had but little difficulty in keeping to the pathway. In open spaces the bracken was knee-deep, and we were soon drenched with dew, but the night was so warm that I had no fear

any ill effect would come to my father. Now that he had recovered from his indignation at the boldness of the Whigs he took everything wonderfully well, and quite entered into the spirit of our flight.

"Wait a few weeks, Wilton," said he, as we paused a moment after crossing a glade, "and we'll repay them with interest for this evening call."

After my experience it is hardly to be wondered that I caught some of his spirit, and replied to him that they richly deserved whatever was in store for them. However strongly I might sympathize with their side in the public quarrel, I could not excuse them for their treatment of me, though at heart I knew it was my father's outspokenness that had brought the persecution upon me.

Reaching the cabin, we began clearing it of the fir boughs left by the last occupants. This task accomplished, we fell to cutting some fresh branches, and soon had a great fragrant pile spread in one corner. Then we sat down upon the threshold in the

moonlight to await David, for we knew that he would slip away to us as soon as our troublesome callers had taken themselves off. While David by no means sympathized with my father's views, he was devotedly attached to him. Soon after my father's removal from New York to the frontier, finding David and his wife in painfully straitened circumstances he had done them a great kindness. Since that time the old German had been loud in his expression of gratitude. His coming to take charge of our estate proved a blessing in many ways. What we should have done without him in the present predicament it would be difficult to conjecture. An acknowledged Whig himself, his devotion was the more remarkable.

It must have been fully an hour before we heard, among the other noises of the night, David's clear whistle come floating up the trail. A few moments later the devoted fellow appeared at the edge of the clearing, puffing under a roll of blankets and a sack of eatables. We welcomed him

warmly, and bade him, as soon as he caught his breath, enlighten us in regard to his share in the events of the evening. Presently we learned his story.

It appeared that he had strolled down to the Flatts about dusk, and was returning from a prolonged chat with some of his acquaintances when he was attracted to Bellinger's by the outcries in that vicinity. Arriving soon after my flight, he found Herborn, who had recovered, haranguing a crowd from the steps of the store. A few words sufficed to show David what was likely to be the outcome of the man's exhortations, and he made off as fast as might be to give us warning. His running powers, however, were poor, and the turbulent Whigs, although they were not aware of it, pressed him closely before he reached the house. Indeed, had it not been for the meadow path, of the existence of which they were ignorant, they might have overhauled them.

After our escape they had thundered at the doors, demanding instant admission, a

demand which David was slow to grant. He parleyed with them at length, giving them voluble assurance that we had left the house without confiding to him our intentions. But they were disposed to question his word, notwithstanding the fact that they knew him for a good Whig, and finally insisted on searching the place for themselves. At last he consented to admit them, and they ransacked room after room, doing not a little damage in their chagrin at not finding us, and leaving with threats of making a public example of us should we be so bold as to return. What their intentions really were, if we did venture to show ourselves, David did not hazard an opinion.

When David's recital of what had occurred was finished, my father announced that we had decided to turn our steps toward Oswego as soon as it was practicable. While our good friend and servant deplored our decision, and doubted the necessity for such a move, saying in a day or two the hotheads would have cooled their tempers,

he readily consented to aid us in our preparations. It was then agreed that David and I should begin to provision the boat on the following night. In the meanwhile I proposed to venture through the woods to Thompson's (a Tory house where there were several men) in search of recruits. At our request David consented to see Van Eyck on the following day with the purpose of persuading him to join us. We realized that if he could be induced to take this step he would prove a most valuable acquisition, for he was skilled as as a woods-man as well as a water-man. We were unanimous in thinking that when he heard of the evening's happenings he would be glad of the opportunity to remove himself from the danger of a like visitation. We were careful in this conference with David to let fall no word in regard to St. Leger or the baronet and their plans.

In spite of our enforced exile, the next five days passed rapidly. Van Eyck's co-operation was secured, while the two Thompson boys swelled our party to the desired



number. The boat was provisioned, and a rendezvous arranged for the night of the 7th. On the morning of the day previous I entrusted David with a missive to John Demooth bidding him be on the lookout for me an hour after nightfall. I also besought him to see Margaret and tell her that I would be in hiding in the shrubbery at the foot of her mother's garden as near as might be to half past nine. I realized that I was running great risks in making this venture, for David had informed me that Herborn was on the alert, the impression prevailing among the Whigs that we were concealed in the vicinity. One thing, however, I was determined upon — go Oswego-ward I would not without attempting to see Margaret, and without endeavoring to confide to my friend Demooth the danger that menaced the Flatts and the valley.

For the first time since our sojourn in the cabin the hours dragged wearily. Since we had taken up our primitive quarters my father had borne all discomforts with a

patience hardly characteristic of him, and now while I moved uneasily about the clearing, flicking off with a birch goad the fern tops and half-ripped berries, he paced calmly up and down in the shade, his features wholly unruffled.

Much to my relief the sky became overcast as evening drew on, and about an hour after our frugal supper, under the pretext of seeing David and taking counsel with him, I set out down the trail. In parting from my father I bade him not to be alarmed if I did not return until late, for another trip to the boat might prove necessary in case anything had been overlooked. The heavens threatened rain and the shadows deepened more swiftly than usual, so that by the time I reached the edge of the forest it was quite dusk. At the house David was on the watch for my coming. Having learned that my message had been delivered to Demooth, and that there were, so far as David was aware, no new developments at the Flatts, I told him to come to the cabin on the morrow for a

final consultation, and hastily retraced my steps to the verge of the woodland.

My path now led me southward along the margin of the cleared land in the direction of a stream called by the Indians the Slanting Waters. Approaching this, I found myself below the Flatts. Here I changed my course, and following the trend of a snake fence soon reached the property of the Demooths. As I neared the out-buildings of the farmstead I heard the sound of horses' hoofs and the murmur of voices. Although there was a strange brightness in the upper air where the moonlight lit up a rift in the massing vapors, everything below was indistinct, so I slipped without fear along the lane, past the cow-sheds, and peered through the bars of the great gate into the yard surrounding the house. As I did so a door swung back, and in the fan of light emitted I saw three men dismounting from their horses. In the sturdy figure of one I recognized the brigadier, Nicholas Herkimer. The elder Demooth, lantern in hand, came out to meet them, and

I then discovered half a dozen other horses picketed near. I had inadvertently stumbled upon a meeting of the Whig leaders.

Clearly there was no chance of seeing my friend, so I beat a hasty retreat into the fields, devoutly hoping that Herborn made one of the company. Yet I knew this was hardly likely. The presence of General Herkimer indicated that it was a gathering of older and wiser heads.

As I turned my steps toward the home of my sweetheart I began to wonder why John had not warned me of this gathering, and could only conclude that he had been kept in ignorance of it until too late to get me word. If I had the good fortune to see Margaret, I resolved to confide in her the intentions of the invaders, and bid her transmit the information to my friend.

I approached the Herborn place—the estate still bore the name of the original owner—with the greatest caution. Making a wide detour I crept toward the shrubbery, where I intended to conceal myself, with

all the stealth of an Indian. Once before Margaret and I had met here, and the ground was hence not wholly unfamiliar. A pathway led from the house to the foot of the garden, where a stone stile gave access to a marshy meadow beyond which flowed the Slanting Waters.

Crouching close to the ground, I followed the line of a stone wall until I came to the stile. Here I paused to reconnoiter. The frogs were in full chorus, and far away riverward a plover was plaintively crying. Near me there was no sound — not a violin note from a katydid or cricket — a fact that aroused my suspicions. Reminding myself that these familiar noises are often wanting when a storm is imminent, I climbed softly over the stile and slid into the bushes upon one side of the pathway. As I did so I fancied I detected a rustle among the shrubbery not far distant, but hearing nothing further I concluded my imagination had tricked me. My senses were now painfully alert, and for half an hour I lay in motionless suspense. Once a twig

snapped, and I thought a foe was upon me. At last I caught the low click of a latch, and a hinge creaked faintly. Raising myself upon one knee I vainly strove to pierce the gloom. My excitement was such that I seemed to hear suspicious noises in every cranny and hollow about me, and yet I had no fear, so intent was I upon getting sight of the form that I had hoped every instant would take shape in the darkness. There was a footfall,—another, and another, light, fleet, unmistakably feminine. I started to my feet and stepped out upon the pathway. The footfalls ceased.

“Wilton!” called a suppressed voice apprehensively.

“Margaret!” I said, and then I had the dear girl in my arms. She was all a-tremble, and cried out as she responded to my caress:

“You musn’t stop a moment! Heinrich suspects you are coming, for he saw John speaking with me this morning, and has watched me ever since.”

“Where is your brother?” I asked, drawing her toward the stile.

"I don't know where he may be now. I left him with my mother a few moments ago, saying I was going to my room ; then I stole down the rear stairs and out at the shed door."

Hardly had she spoken when there was a shrill whistle from behind the stile, not more than a dozen feet from where we stood. Margaret clutched my arm as she strove to suppress a cry of terror. Herborn's voice in the direction of the house replied to the whistle, and there was the crash of a heavy body plunging through the bushes on our right. It was no time for lingering farewells, but I gave my beloved one passionate embrace, whispering, as I kissed her,

"Good-by, dearest. I'm off for Oswego tomorrow. Don't fear; they sha'n't catch me!"

Then I pushed her gently from me, and, after an instant's hesitation, she ran toward the house as though she would intercept her brother.

At this moment a man sprang down from the stile; the plunging form in the bushes

was almost upon me; and I knew Herborn was rapidly approaching along the pathway. I saw that I was in desperate plight, and there was no time to debate which way I should fly. On the left of the garden was a dry ditch, beyond which was a row of brambles flanked in turn by a high paling. Toward these obstructions I made a bold dash, two of my pursuers hot after me. I took the ditch at a flying leap, landed fairly, but floundered among the briers. Recovering myself, I gripped the top of the paling just as the feet of one of the men struck the earth behind me. My heart sank, yet I vaulted with mad energy. A thorny withe tore a great rent in my breeches, and my heels came in contact with a pair of arms, so instead of wholly clearing the obstruction I struck the top of it, and sprawled, bruised and half breathless, in the tall grass on the other side. To my pursuers the fence proved a troublesome obstacle, so I had a few seconds in which to recover myself, and as the first of them cleared the barrier I sped away as fast as my legs would carry



me in the direction of the Slanting Waters.

The field in which I found myself was similar to that in the rear of the garden—a meadow, marshy and uneven. At any moment I might stumble into a bog-hole, in which case I could hardly avoid falling into the hands of Herborn and his companions, who, now little more than twenty yards distant, were straining every nerve to overtake me. My bruises proved troublesome, and I began to realize that I was losing ground. This discovery incited me to renewed exertion, and presently I forgot my lameness and had the satisfaction of knowing that I was drawing ahead again. It was at this stage of my flight that I encountered the first bit of marshy land. Trusting blindly to fortune, I crossed it by a series of flying leaps, considerably widening the gap between myself and those who were in chase. My advantage was only temporary, however, for I was well-nigh mired shortly afterward in another watery depression. But Herborn's exclamation, "We've got him!" acted as a spur, and

once on firm ground the proximity of the stream, as revealed by the dark line of trees, gave me hope.

At this juncture I certainly fell upon luck, for I came on the Slanting Waters at an opening in the dense foliage that fringed it, and at a spot where the bank, in most places precipitous or abruptly shelving, sloped gently. The current swept by, swift and deep, swollen by severe thunder-storms in the upland wilderness which the creek drained. Indeed at this point—a quarter of a mile from where it debouched into the Mohawk—the stream had the appearance of a river. The water was washing high upon the stones beyond a four-foot strip of sand. The instant my feet came in contact with the cobbles an idea that missed little of being an inspiration flashed into my brain. I knew my three pursuers must be within hearing, so I seized and pitched several large stones, one quickly after the other, into the water. The effect produced was that of some one plunging into the stream. Then I ran a few steps along the

sand to a spot where the bank began to rise sharply, and wormed myself under the overhanging roots and earth. Here I discovered a dry cavity worn by the action of the ice in some springtime freshet—a most secure hiding-place.

Hardly had I esconced myself before there was a rush of feet hard-by.

“Curse him!” panted the first comer, “he’s taken to the water.”

“Are you sure?” demanded Herborn, who was the second to arrive upon the scene.

“Sure! Didn’t you hear him leap in?”

“I did!” cried the third of my pursuers.

They hurried past my place of concealment, and I knew they were peering into the darkness, straining their eyes to catch a glimpse of me.

“Do you see anything?” asked Herborn.

“I thought I did, but it’s only a log,” replied the one whom he had addressed. “It’s the devil of a pity we haven’t a flint.”

This remark gave me a thrill of relief. My greatest fear had been that they would have the means of striking a light.

And now there happened one of the weirdest things that has come under my cognizance. Seemingly out of the stream not far distant, where there was a wide bend, there arose an agonizing cry that died away into a gurgling moan. It must have been the sound made by some strayed animal of the wilds, or some swamp-bird in distress, and have proceeded from the woodland beyond the Slanting Waters, but to me, and to the three men on the shore, it was like the despairing wail of a human creature.

"By God!" shouted Herborn, "he's got in the eddies yonder, and is drowning!"

I knew by the silence that followed that they were listening intently, and strained my ears to catch a repetition of the cry, but none came.

"He's done for!" said one of the other two presently. "That's a cursedly ugly spot over there. I've often noticed it: steep bank, and a mighty deep hole under it."

"Well, I'd no wish nor intention to drive

the fellow to his death," remarked Herborn, "though he was a Tory."

They lingered a few moments, listening, and saying little. Finally I heard them climb the bank, and then the only audible noise was the hoarse swash of the current. They believed me drowned, that was clear, and while Herborn might, in a half-hearted fashion, regret that he had been indirectly the means of my end, he would hardly fail to report my fate to Margaret. I was well content to remain dead for the present so far as Herborn and most of the Whigs were concerned, but the knowledge that my beloved would mourn for me caused me for a space no little disturbance of mind. Then the thought came to me that I could assure her of my safety through David and John Demooth, and so, through the thin rain which had begun falling, I set out buoyantly for our refuge in the woodland cabin.

## CHAPTER IV

### *In the Wilderness*

I WAS forced to move slowly, the darkness had so increased, and it was hard upon midnight ere I reached the trail through the forest. Here new difficulties beset my path, owing to the denseness of the gloom, and I lost my way half a dozen times before I came to the slope at the crest of which the cabin stood. To my infinite surprise a flickering light shone from the doorway, and I hastened forward in apprehension. Attracted by the noise of my approach, a man appeared upon the threshold, shading his eyes so that he might pierce the thick shadows. As I drew nearer I recognized him as Silas, the elder of the Thompson boys.

"Hello!" he cried, half raising the rifle he held in his hand. "Who is it?"

"'Tis I, Wilton Aubrey," I replied.

"We've been waiting for you these two hours," said he, as he grasped my hand.

My father and Will Thompson now joined us, and there was a series of questions and counter-questions.

"Did you see Van Eyck?" the Thompsons demanded, taking it for granted that I had been to the boat.

"No; I wonder where he can be?" I said, feeling my ground a little.

"Silas had word from him late this evening," interposed my father, "that the Whigs have discovered we are hiding here and are planning to surprise us to-morrow. It is Van Eyck's advice that we get off to-night."

"He said he'd be on hand at the boat at two o'clock," put in Will Thompson. "We sha'n't be much late if we start at once."

Then he added, turning to me:

"We'd have left before, but were afraid of missing you."

"There's nothing to delay us now," said my father.

"But David!" I exclaimed, having in mind my message to Margaret.

"Oh, he will understand why we have

hastened away, never fear! And there are really no further instructions to give him. I can't see that it matters a whit."

Although my father intended thus to dismiss the matter of David, I resolved, inasmuch as the most direct route to the boat would take us past the house, that I would rouse our faithful servitor and have a word with him.

The possessions we intended to carry were collected, Will Thompson took from its cranny the half-burned pine torch, and our little company started. We agreed that until we neared the cleared land there would be no danger in the lighted flambeau. The rain was still falling, but it had not perceptibly increased in force, and, for the present, protected much of the time by the trees, it caused us but trifling inconvenience.

After the torch had been extinguished and we had come to the three pines in the rear of our home, I made known my determination to speak with David. My father and both the Thompsons demurred, but I



was stubborn, and they finally consented to a brief halt.

I know not what impelled me to approach the house cautiously, but certainly it proved most fortunate that I did so. Thinking I detected a noise near the rear doorway, I paused by the well-sweep and listened. I had about decided that I had been deceived by my imagination when a man rose from the doorstep and moved toward me. I was so startled that for an instant I had no power of action. When I recovered from my surprise I crouched close to the earth, and presently the man stopped.

"Umph!" I heard him say. "I must have been dreaming. I thought I saw something moving out here."

He yawned, stretched himself, and shuffled back to his post of observation, while I, with all possible care, retreated and joined my waiting companions.

"We must be on our guard," I announced; "the house is watched."

"They suspect David now that they know you are still in the neighborhood," said Silas Thompson.

As we warily made our way to the river, the realization that I must leave the Flatts, for I knew not how long a period, without sending any message to Margaret came upon me with full force, and the thought was bitter indeed. Others, doubtless, would warn the valley in due time of the approach of St. Leger and his forces, but there would be no one to bear to my beloved the assurance of my safety. Forced by circumstances into a position I abhorred, racked in mind and exhausted in body, it is small wonder that despair took hold upon me, and I cared little whether I was living or dead. I gave no heed to the irascible Dutchman's complaints at our late arrival, and had to be roused by a sharp word from my father to do my part in getting the boat under way.

Our craft was built after the model of the large river *bateaux*. It was flat-bottomed and equipped with both poles and oars. There were traverse seats, as in an ordinary row boat, and along the sides, a foot or more below the gunwale, a plank was

stretched on which to stand while punting. Though ugly in appearance the boat was stanch, and we had nothing to fear either from snags or sharp rocks.

I can recall little that happened during the first hours of our journey. Van Eyck, at the prow, kept a sharp lookout ahead, shouting back his commands to my father, who was steering. The other three of us relieved one another at the oars. When rowing I bent to my work doggedly, though my muscles ached and my head was in a whirl; when it was my turn to rest I lay in a kind of stupor on the canvas of the tent. Toward morning the weather cleared, and the sun had risen before we drew into a little cove and beached our boat. So overcome was I with fatigue that I flung myself upon the grass beneath a great sycamore, and was soon in a profound slumber. When roused for breakfast I ate mechanically, and then stretched myself out and fell asleep again. It was mid-afternoon before I awakened. I was stiff, and there there was a queer feeling in my head, but

on stirring about this passed away. I found Van Eyck preparing to cook some bacon over a glowing bed of coals; the Thompson boys were making the few additional preparations for our primitive meal, while my father, the picture of content, was reclining upon a blanket and watching the proceedings with a lively interest.

Our next halt was at twilight, but we hastened on again as soon as the moon rose. Toward morning we once more encamped, and rested till the following midday, when we continued our voyage until we reached the mouth of Six Mile Creek, about two miles and a half from Fort Stanwix, the point of portage to Wood Creek, the old "carrying-place" of the Indians. To avoid being seen and detained by the garrison of the fort we must make the portage after dark, and midnight seemed the most suitable hour for the attempt. It was about eleven when we pushed our boat into mid-stream. A brisk south breeze was blowing, and clouds were racing across the face of the moon. There was no need of proceed-

ing with caution until we approached the spot where *bateaux* commonly landed. This was some distance from the fort, but inasmuch as we thought it quite possible we might find guards here stationed we scanned the shore narrowly as we drew near. A bittern rose from the reeds close at hand and whirred away with an angry boom. For the moment we were startled, but the presence of the bird made it clear that there were no watchers to be feared, so we hastened partially to unload our boat, bestowing a portion of our possessions in the canvas of the tent. Although two journeys were necessary, we accomplished the portage easily and without incident, thanks to Van Eyck's perfect familiarity with the ground. While we silently passed and repassed near the fort, I gazed at its dark outline and wondered how soon, and under what circumstances, I should visit the scene again, little dreaming how many dramatic episodes were here shortly to be enacted, and how prominent a part I was destined to take in them.

Owing to the excitement and to the novelty of our experiences, now that I had recovered from the strain of my night's adventures by the Slanting Waters, I had somewhat regained my spirits, though I could never long banish Margaret from my mind, and at times the thought of her, nearly distraught—as my fancy pictured her—over my wretched end, seemed more than I could bear.

Wood Creek, the stream on which we now embarked, was as strange a water-course as ever man adventured upon. It was narrow and incredibly serpentine, bending back upon itself until it seemed as though we made no progress whatever. Moreover it traversed a swampy region, much of which was overgrown by a well-nigh impenetrable forest. Our advance was marked with infinite labor. Now we stuck upon a snag; now we were grounded upon a mud-bank; now we were halted by a matted mass of reeds. Huge and uncouth birds, roused from their slumbers, would wing away with raucous cries;

animals of the wilderness would sound a sudden summons to us from out of the gloom, until my father and myself, unaccustomed to these weird and uncanny noises, began to feel that we had come into a land of demons.

Presently we wholly lost sight of the sky, interlacing vines and overhanging boughs shut out the moonlight, and we were forced to kindle a blaze of pine knots in one of our iron pans. Placing this improvised torch in the prow, we worked slowly forward, yet when the gray of dawn began to show we had progressed but a few miles into the dreary waste. Never, I vow, was the light of morning more welcome, and as soon as we were able to see the nature of the ground about us we selected a dry spot and encamped.

I had been unconscious a number of hours when I was awakened by the tormenting attacks of gnats and mosquitoes. After vainly trying to fight them off, I got upon my feet, and, finding my companions still slumbering, walked on tiptoe until I

had put a short distance between us, and then strolled on into the woods which, at this point, were not dense. I had no special thought in mind save to rid myself from the pestering insects, and had no notion of wandering any distance, for I realized in how dangerous a predicament I should be if I chanced to lose my way. I had gone as far as seemed wise, and was on the point of turning back when I came upon a grassy space, bare of trees, through which ran a well-beaten trail.

Indians! The sight of the trail put them instantly into my mind, and a sensation of danger swept over me which amounted to nothing short of instinct. In breathless haste I concealed myself behind a tangle of wild berry bushes that grew on one side of the path, and it was well I did so, for I had little more than crouched down when out of the forest issued a band of savages in single file, hideously painted and well armed. Two of them had fresh scalps dangling at their belts, and I was horrified to see that a white man wearing the buff



and blue uniform of a Continental soldier was marching in their midst, their prisoner. He was gagged, his hands were tied behind him, and there was a look upon his face that would have moved the stoniest heart to compassion. One Indian was leading him by a leathern noose which was fastened about his neck, while another behind kept prodding him viciously with a hunting knife. There were twenty in the band, and they passed me like so many evil shadows.

As they vanished in the forest I slipped from my concealment and watched them until a turn in the trail shut them from sight. What madness possessed me, what blind recklessness seized me, I know not, but with scarcely an instant's hesitation I crept after them. Never did it occur to me that to rescue the poor wretch from the clutches of the savages was a wild impossibility, something that half a dozen experienced woodsmen would have hesitated to attempt. The awful anguish written upon the soldier's face was burned into my brain,

and more and more determined to succor him did I become as I followed the footsteps of his captors.

Careful to keep far enough in the rear to avoid the danger of discovery, at length, after having been perhaps a quarter of a mile upon their track, I saw that they had reached their camping-place. We had drawn away from Wood Creek to higher ground. The trees in the vicinity were largely maples and hemlocks, and as the latter were of the scrub variety I had an excellent opportunity to approach the encampment, as I supposed, unobserved. Abandoning the trail, I advanced with the greatest caution, and had almost arrived at a point where I could detect what the redskins were about when the swish of a released bough caused me to look back. There, little more than a dozen feet distant, stood an Indian, tomahawk in hand, a grin of triumph on his hideous features. I was too amazed to move or speak, and the mouth of the savage widened as he regarded me. Then something so surprising occurred

that my expression must have changed suddenly, for the Indian's suspicions were aroused. From behind a thick scrub hemlock the slim and sinewy form of Van Eyck appeared like an apparition. As unerring as ever panther sprang he leaped upon the redskin, before the savage had time to turn. One set of powerful fingers gripped the Indian's throat and stifled his cry for aid; the other seized the wrist of the hand which held the tomahawk, and the weapon dropped useless to the earth.

"Quick!" cried Van Eyck, in an undertone, as he laid the half-strangled savage on the ground, "take his knife and cut his leg-gings into strips. We must bind him."

I did as commanded with as much expedition as my shaking hands would permit, and together we secured and gagged our captive.

"He'll free himself after a few hours, if they don't find him before then," said Van Eyck. "In the meanwhile this is no place for us."

I realized but too well the truth of this

statement, although the thought of the poor soldier still tugged at my heart. Doing as Van Eyck bade, I followed in his footsteps, and ere long we stood in the grassy space where I had first seen the redskins. Here my rescuer paused and looked at me quizzically, his grim, swarthy features gradually changing into something like a smile. Presently he thrust his long lean finger at me.

"Young man," he said, in his curious broken English, which it would be impossible to reproduce, "let me give you a grain of advice, and do you treasure it up, for old Van Eyck knows what he's talking about. Whatever else you fool with, let a red 'Injun' alone. You may think the dirty rascals are with us in this struggle, but I tell you if they found you spying on their camp—friend or foe—they'd cut you up and feed you to their dogs. To an 'Injun' a white man's a white man, and however pretty the cusses may talk to your face they'll scalp you on the quiet if they get the chance, and I reckon you'd rather

know your scalp's on your own head than drying in a wigwam, even if it's that of the biggest chief of the Six Nations."

This speech delivered, the wisdom and truth of which I had occasion to recall later, Van Eyck led on again, and it was not until afterwards that I learned how he had chanced to come so opportunely to my assistance. Awakening soon after I strolled away from our camping place, he had noted my absence, and fearful lest I should become lost in the forest had traced my steps to the Indian trail. Surmising what I had done, he set hastily out in pursuit, detected the savage (probably a straggler belonging to the band) hard upon my heels, and doubtless saved me from a very harrowing experience, if not from death.

We found my father and the two Thompsons in a state of wonder and anxiety.

"We've just been into the woods a bit," said Van Eyck in response to their inquiries. "We've seen some 'Injun' signs—" here he screwed one eye around and winked slyly at me—"and we might better be getting along."

Fortunately the soldiers of the garrison at Fort Stanwix had not as yet been able to do much toward obstructing Wood Creek, owing to the presence of the Indians, and after an hour or two our progress was quite encouraging, a fact that was in part due to the gradually widening channel. I own that I was far from comfortable during the remainder of that day, and I saw that Van Eyck was apprehensive, for he kept watch of the wooded banks with a lynx-like scrutiny. Our voyage, however, was uninterrupted, and when, late that evening, we camped upon the shore of Oneida Lake, on the farther side of Fish Creek, I felt for the first time since my narrow escape something like security.

But the fair fortune that had thus far attended us on our journey deserted us on the following day. Late in the afternoon, as we were approaching the lower end of the lake, we were overtaken by a severe thunder-storm, our boat was nearly swamped, and we were all of us drenched to the skin. Then came a sudden change in the atmos-

phere. The wind, which had been blowing from the south all day, materially assisting our progress, veered swiftly to the west. The air grew more and more chilly as night descended, and by the time we reached the deserted walls of Fort Brewerton we were every one of us, in our still soaking clothing, shaking with the cold.

In one of the cabins formerly used as the officers' quarters we kindled a great fire in the rude stone fire-place, and spread out our wet garments to dry. I gave my father a vigorous rubbing, brewed him a hot drink, and wrapped him in a pair of blankets that had escaped the general deluge. In spite of these precautions, before an hour had passed he was in a high fever. Thus he lay for several days, while I strove to keep a brave heart, knowing all the time that his condition was most critical, and seeing by the manner of my companions that they shared in my anxiety. Only when forced to do so from exhaustion did I leave my father's side, and then he had from my comrades the same watchful care

which I gave him. I suffered more during these hours of uncertainty than later when I had to confront sorrow face to face. My trying and unnatural position was forgotten; even my grief over leaving my sweetheart under such a gloomy cloud became as naught. I seemed to see my father, who had ever cherished me so fondly, and for whom I had the warmest affection despite our differences, wasting away before me. The last strong tie of blood that bound me to my kind was, to all appearance, about to be severed.

But the fever left him unexpectedly; his old energy and stubbornness reasserted themselves, and one morning when I was discussing with Van Eyck outside our quarters the feasibility of resuming our journey after two or three days' further waiting my father called me to him and proposed that we start at once. This proposition at first struck me as the height of folly, but after the matter had been talked over with the others we decided to venture it. The invalid thrived under the change, and on the



afternoon of the 18th of July we disembarked at the rude landing-place at Oswego, and took up our abode in one of the dis-used traders' houses within a stone's throw of the fort.

## CHAPTER V

### *At Oswego*

**J**UST before noontime on the third day after our arrival I ascended to the summer-house which the energetic Major Duncan (he who commanded the post for several years after the French and Indian War) had caused to be constructed among the boughs of a lofty linden which stood at the end of the bowling-green southeast of the fortifications. It was little more than a rough platform, but it afforded a wide view of the lake to the east beyond the tongue of land which in part sheltered the harbor entrance. I had discovered the outlook the day we reached Oswego, and had repaired thither, at my father's request, several times between each rising and setting of the sun to scan the lake in search of the constantly expected armament. It was delightfully cool, and with a blanket for a cushion and the tree trunk for a back

I had spent a number of quiet hours in this leafy aerie.

I must confess that frequently I paid small heed to the sweeping curves of the shore-line, and the distant point where the boats of St. Leger were first likely to come into view. My mind would revert to the Flatts and Margaret, and then I had no eyes for the shimmering blue water and no ears for the bird-song that ever broke in little waves of melody about me.

I had already made one considerable tarry in the tree top that morning, and was not now inclined to remain. So having given the coast and the horizon careful scrutiny, and satisfied myself that there was no sign of the awaited expedition, I descended leisurely with the intention of seeking out my father and delivering my accustomed report.

Although the bowling-green, where the officers amused themselves in Major Duncan's day, was still smooth and grassy, the ground beyond it, which had once been cleared and used as a vegetable garden,

was a tangle of weeds, briars, and small maple saplings. Hardly had I regained an erect posture after my spring from the lower branches of the linden when this thicket parted and an Indian stepped into sight. Saluting me with just a perceptible nod, and giving me "good-day" in the best of English, he came toward me across the green.

Startled though I was, I did my best to return his greeting as though I had been accustomed all my life to have Indians appear to me in this fashion. I had an excellent chance to observe him as he approached. His dress was half savage and half civilized. He was tall, yet well knit, and while his face showed many racial marks there was that in it which betokened unusual character. The feathers in his head-dress told me he was a chief, but his manner would have afforded reason for this belief had there been nothing visible to indicate his rank.

He eyed me sharply as he drew nigh.

"I have never seen you before," he said,

his gaze still upon me. "You are not of Colonel Butler's company."

"No," I answered, "I am here with my father to join Colonel St. Leger."

We were now standing facing one another in the center of the green.

"You come from the Mohawk Valley perhaps?"

I assented.

"My old home," he said.

"Ah!" I returned.

"Yes; possibly you may have heard of me there. I am Captain Brant."

I had surmised as much when he said the valley was his former home, yet I felt a strange chill pass over me at the sound of his name, though at this time it was by no means so dreaded as it grew to be later. The title "Captain," conferred upon him by the English, he was fond of using when among white men.

He forebore to question me in regard to my identity, but I saw that he was waiting for me to inform him who I was.

"I am called Wilton Aubrey," I said.

"I have heard of your father," he replied.

His speech had the Indian terseness, and his nationality showed itself in the deep tones of his voice. One listening to his conversation, however, and not seeing the man, would hardly have detected that he was not using his native tongue.

"Our friends," he said, lifting his eyes to the top of the linden — "they have not yet been sighted?"

"There is at present no sign of them," I answered.

He led the way downward toward the river, asking a few keen questions as we went. Despite his pleasant manner, it was with a feeling of relief that I parted from him at the door of the block-house where we were lodged, and watched him swing easily on to the water-side. Here he stepped into a canoe, seized the paddle, and was soon skimming across the harbor toward the opposite shore, where he disappeared in the wood.

Two days later when I climbed to my

post of observation at mid-morning, I descried several black specks dotting the water in the far distance. I hailed my discovery with joy. In my present mood inaction was well-nigh intolerable. Constant activity was my only refuge from the thoughts that crowded upon me; for, struggle as I would, I could not put the hateful part I was forced to play from my mind. Yet I meant to do faithfully what appeared to be my duty.

My father received my news with undisguised delight. He was far from strong, yet his wonderful nervous energy made him seem almost vigorous.

The tidings spread rapidly, and by the time the boats rounded the adjacent point all Butler's corps, and a small body of Indians under Brant, had gathered upon the beach to greet them. As the *bateaux* swung into full view a ringing cheer went up from the "Rangers," and a wild war-whoop from the savages.

"I don't see St. Leger," my father said, shading his eyes and gazing intently at the

nearing force. "And surely there must be other boats! It would be madness to proceed against Fort Stanwix with these few men."

We continued to scan the *bateaux* eagerly.

"There are Sir John and Colonel Claus!" cried my father at length. "Yes; they recognize me," and he waved his hand in response to a similar greeting from two men standing side by side in the nearest craft.

"Glad to see you, Aubrey," called the colonel, as they drew within hailing distance.

"Is St. Leger with you?" shouted my father.

"No; he's several days behind with the rest of the command," was the reply.

The foremost *bateaux* was soon beached, and the leaders leaped ashore. They shook hands warmly with my father, who presented me to them. Colonel Claus, who was the baronet's brother-in-law, and considerably his senior, greeted me cordially, but in Sir John's manner toward me I detected an ill-concealed coldness. Instantly I felt repelled, the whole air of the man was in such



direct contrast with the bluff, hearty bearing of the colonel. There was a hard look about his eyes, and I fancied I saw a sneer lurking in the curve of his lips. He turned to give some orders to the officers in command of the other boats, and with my father and Colonel Claus I withdrew to a point a little above the scene of disembarkation.

"These men belong to Sir John's regiment and to the Hanau Chasseurs," said the colonel. "You will find some old acquaintances among the 'Greens,' as we call Sir John's troop."

"Yes," replied my father, "I already notice familiar faces."

Brant now approached and addressed our companion, who walked away with him. Shortly we were joined by the Thompson boys and Van Eyck, and with them watched with interest the unloading of the boats. This task accomplished, several companies formed into line and marched toward the fort, while the remaining men busied themselves over the disposal of the provisions and camp equipment. For the

rest of the day there was no lack of occupation. The Thompsons and Van Eyck were at once enrolled in one of Sir. John's companies, and left us to take up their quarters with their comrades. Acquaintances of my father's were constantly coming and going, and toward night there was a brief drill upon the parade-ground within the fort. Before my father's position and mine in the expedition could be determined it was necessary to await the arrival of the commander-in-chief, consequently for the present we were only spectators.

Late that evening I heard a wild hollering from the opposite side of the harbor. My father had retired, but I still sat without, too full of excitement over the scenes of the day to feel in the least drowsy. Rising, I went toward the waterside, where I encountered several of the "Rangers."

"What's going on?" said I.

"A party of Brant's Indians is just arriving," answered one of the group with a shrug. "It's a jolly good job they are our friends. I shouldn't care to march

into the wilderness if they were n't, I can tell you."

Suddenly a great tongue of flame shot up into the black hollow of the night, and we beheld fifty or more half-naked forms dancing with piercing whoops and uncouth gyrations in a cleared space upon the farther bank. Fascinated by the weird spectacle, I watched them until they finally ceased from sheer exhaustion, and then took my way slowly back to the block-house. As I drew near the corner of the building I saw a solitary figure awaiting my approach. At first I thought it was my father, who had been roused by the savage clamor and had come out to discover what was taking place. I soon realized, however, that it was a man of heavier build, but I did not recognize him until he addressed me. It was Sir John Johnson.

"Your father is within, I presume," he said.

"I think so," I answered, "unless he has been disturbed since I left by yonder uproar."

"Our friends *are* a trifle demonstrative. One might almost imagine they had caught a Whig and were making merry at his expense."

The baronet laughed, and there was mockery in his mirth. How chanced he here at this hour? Was it chance? These thoughts came into my mind as I paused near him. He had planted himself where I would most naturally pass on my way to the door, and I must step aside if I would avoid him. His words, his whole attitude, stirred all the latent antagonism in me.

"I trust our friends," I exclaimed, purposely using and emphasizing the same terms he had applied to the savages, "will not practice their devilish cruelties upon us in case there should turn out to be a scarcity of Whigs."

"Us?" returned the baronet, with a peculiar rising inflection that carried with it both insinuation and insult.

Then it flashed upon me that this man suspected me. Had he ground for more than a suspicion? He had lately been in

New York. He had heard, perhaps, that my uncle was a Whig, and knew that I had lived several years in his family. Could it be that he knew more than this?—that a report of my participation in the affair of the tea or the guns had reached his ears? It seemed most unlikely. My intimacy with Alexander Hamilton, who had already won distinction in the field, and had for several months been acting as the aide-de-camp of Washington, must, however, have come to his knowledge. This, I decided, was the reason for the manner he had adopted toward me. He doubtless thought himself safe in assuming that the loyalty of the friend of so fiery a patriot as Hamilton might rightly be regarded with suspicion.

As these thoughts jostled in swift eddy through my brain he fixed his penetrating gaze upon me in the July starlight. If he expected that I would flinch he was grievously disappointed. I realized that I was being tested, and I flatter myself that I was quite as self-contained as he. I

looked him fairly in the eyes as I replied.

"Certainly," said I. "Why not *us*, Sir John Johnson?"

This was a challenge direct, yet his answer was evasive.

"Ah, to be sure!" he replied. "My remark was merely a pleasantry. But tell me," he continued, with a sudden change of front "how are our affairs prospering in the valley? I haven't as yet had an opportunity of speaking in private with your father, and strolled down at this late hour in the hope that I might find him still visible."

"My father is far from strong," I said, "and the stir of your arrival has quite exhausted him. He has been in bed an hour or more. As for news from the valley, I must confess myself but a poor bearer of tidings."

I was in no wise mollified or thrown off my guard by his swift veer to the agreeable, and determined, if I could, to bring the interview to a close. Had I considered my own interests I should have adopted a

very different attitude from the one I assumed. In fact, had there been time for second thought I should have put forth every effort to produce a favorable impression upon Sir John. He was second in command, and it behooved me to stand in his good graces quite as much as in those of St. Leger. All this, however, I did not at the moment consider, for the devil of combativeness within me was aroused.

The baronet appeared to take no notice of my last declaration. for he continued to question me.

“What is your opinion of the prospect for a rising in Tryon County when once Fort Stanwix has fallen?” said he. “Will the Whigs not all be king’s men then? Shall we meet with any opposition, think you?”

Nothing could have been more unfortunate than my reply, though I gave him offence most unwittingly. Even to this day I can see nothing in my words at which a man not unduly sensitive should have taken umbrage.

"Sir," I said, "you who have spent most of your life in the county can certainly judge of these matters better than I. Your Tryon neighbors, I fancy, have not changed since you took up your abode elsewhere."

I suppose it was my reference to his flight into Canada that fired his anger, although I have since heard it many times affirmed that he felt perfectly justified in the course he took, and regarded what some called "breaking his parole" to be no stain upon his honor.

I saw his face contract and his arm twitch, and I truly believe he would have struck me had I not started back a step. He broke out with an awful oath—and he had plenty of them at his command.

"If it weren't for your father, you damned, white-livered rebel hound," he cried, and his eyes seemed like baleful fires in the darkness, "I'd hand you over to my Missisaguas, and you'd have to grow a new tongue before you answered me again like that."



I began stammering something about not intending to affront him, when he turned on his heel and strode off into the night, leaving me with the consciousness that I had made a bitter enemy of one who might work me incalculable harm.

## CHAPTER VI

### *The Coming of St. Leger*

**A**S may be imagined, my sleep was restless and broken, for through my dreams stalked the form of the baronet, his dark face grown sinister. I was out before bugle-call the next morning feeling perplexed and dull of brain, but a plunge in the river washed away part of the care-cobweb. Then I climbed to the now familiar outlook in the linden, whence I saw the day grow into full glory. The ringing rising-peal came up to me from the fort, the smoke ascended from the Indian encampment on the farther side of the harbor, disheveled forms issued from the block-houses, and presently there was a general stir. Canoes began to shoot to and fro across the placid water, there was a bustle near the *bateaux*, and filled with the energetic spirit which animated the scene I returned to our quarters and set about getting breakfast.

Later there were maneuvers to watch both within and without the fort, and while my father and I were laughing over the blunders of the "awkward squad" in one of the companies of Johnson's "Greens," we heard some one hailing us from the crest of the slope below which the drill was taking place. Looking up we beheld Colonel Claus gesticulating to us. He held something in his hand which I inferred to be a letter.

"A message from St. Leger!" he shouted.

Instantly my father was all excitement. His cheeks, which had more than their wonted flush that morning, now flamed, and I had fairly to use force to prevent him from rushing up the slope, so eager was he to learn the burden of the message.

"Your friend, our commander, is at Salmon Creek, twenty miles distant," called the colonel, as we at length approached the spot where he stood.

"He will reach here today then!" exclaimed my father.

"No; I fear not, since he writes asking

that we join him there and march overland."

"March overland?"

"Yes, but such a course is impracticable. I have consulted Brant, who says his Indians will not go to Salmon Creek. I am just sending word to St. Leger to this effect. He will undoubtedly come on to-morrow."

I spent the remainder of the day in endeavoring to keep my father quiet. The tidings of the morning had strung his nerves to the highest pitch, and by night his restlessness had reduced me to a state bordering on exhaustion. Rarely still for more than fifteen minutes, he kept me moving (for I would not leave his side) from block-house to fort, from fort to beach, and from beach to river-landing. At dusk-fall, however, I prevailed upon him to remain within. He would not listen to me at first, but when I mentioned the possibility of his becoming so fatigued that he would not have his full strength on the morrow he yielded to my wishes, though not without making light of my fears. When I had finally seen him

safely bestowed in bed, sleeping deeply under the influence of a quieting potion I had induced him to swallow, I drew a long breath of relief, and went out into the darkness to find some calm for my own tensely strung nerves. It was generally known that the commander-in-chief, with the remainder of the forces, would arrive on the following day, and a subdued air of expectancy pervaded the whole encampment.

I chanced upon Van Eyck near the river-landing, and he joined me. He was in high feather, and his rude jocularities had the effect of brightening my dull spirits. Since the episode in the wilderness I had felt a strong liking for the eccentric Dutchman, which had doubtless originated in gratitude for his timely rescue but which had grown into something closer and warmer. His manner told me that he returned my friendship, and when I again sought the block-house it was with the sense that I had at least one true, albeit rough, adviser to lean upon.

My father was awake the next day at early bird-song, and I heard him stirring about soon after sunrise. I was glad to notice the absence of the flush in his face as we sat over our breakfast of coffee, bacon and hardtack. He enjoyed the meal, and remarked that he had not felt so well in weeks. Toward mid-morning he persuaded me to let him ascend with me to the linden top. Cleats had been fastened in several places upon the tree trunk to make the climb easy, and, as I was able to follow closely and assist him, it seemed wiser to grant his whim than to arouse his ill-humor by opposing it. For an hour or more we reclined among the branches, intent upon the undulating shore-line; then our watch was rewarded, and my father was the first to detect the approaching boats. My attention had wandered from the water for a moment, and when, at his cry, I turned my eyes again to the lake, I saw the *bateaux* clearly. They had evidently kept very near the shore or we should have observed them sooner. Now they were but a few miles distant.

Presently we heard faint shouts from the beach that were taken up again at the fort, and we knew that others had descried the coming expedition. We remained in the linden until the *bateaux* were a little more than a mile away, and then joined the gathering on the lake shore. The troops were drawn up under arms to receive their commander. Sir John and Colonel Claus were pacing up and down in earnest consultation in front of the "Greens," who formed the center of the array. Brant had massed his Indians on the left with Butler's Rangers, while the Chasseurs occupied a position on the right. Beyond the last named troop, on a slight elevation, my father and I took our places.

As the *bateaux* drew near, Colonel Claus caught sight of us and bade us join the baronet and himself, an invitation which my father eagerly, and I reluctantly, accepted. The composure of my father surprised me. He evinced no sign of the emotion which I knew was stirring him, save that there was an unwonted bright-

ness about his eyes and a spasmodic twitching at the corners of his mouth.

"There is St. Leger," he said to me suddenly, as a man in the last boat rose and surveyed the shore. I could not see at that distance what manner of man he was, save that he seemed not above middle height.

As the *bateaux* approached the beach a cheer rang down the lines, and a greeting salvo was fired. The boat which bore the commander shot in between the others, and St. Leger was the first to land. The baronet and Claus pressed forward to meet him as he set foot on shore. I saw that my father was trembling, and knew how strong was his desire to run and clasp the hand of his old comrade. Just then St. Leger turned toward us. His eyes fell upon my father's face, and an expression of doubt and amazement that changed to one of pleasure swept across his countenance.

"Jack Aubrey?—By my faith, it is!" he cried, and strode quickly toward us.



"Barry!" I heard my father say, and while the two were exchanging greetings I had a chance to observe the man whose name had been familiar to me since my earliest recollection.

He was of medium stature, as I had before observed, with a figure too corpulent to be graceful. His face was cleanly shaven, and had evidently once been handsome, but lines of dissipation had played havoc with his good looks. His eyes especially showed his weakness for the bowl, and while his manner was engaging, it smacked to me a trifle of self-importance. I own that I was disappointed in him.

His reception of me, however, was most gracious.

"I shall like you first for your father's sake," he said, "and later I know I shall for your own."

As I thanked him for his cordiality I caught, over his shoulder, the eyes of Sir John Johnson upon me, and the look in them gave me food for much thought.

A company of the "Greens" was detailed

to escort St. Leger to his quarters within the fort. As he was leaving he waved his hand to my father and called out:

“Till tonight!”

“He has changed, Wilton, sadly,” said my father to me, as we wandered toward our rooms in the block-house. “It’s drink. That’s the whole cause. You can see it in his face.”

I hardly knew what reply to make, and so was silent. My father seemed not to notice my reticence, for presently he exclaimed:

“But he’s the same at heart, the same at heart, I’m sure of it!” This thought appeared to cheer him, and he was quite gay over our midday luncheon.

I assisted my father in making such simple arrangements as were possible for the entertainment of his guest that evening. We brightened with wild flowers and fresh green boughs the larger of the two rooms in which we were quartered. We sweetened the place with the strewn needles of the pine, and by fastening blankets on the rough chairs

Van Eyck had fashioned for us contrived comfortable seats. We added to our store of pitch knots, and got out the one candle that still remained. Two of the three bottles of old Hollands which we had treasured were also produced, and a pair of small silver pocket flasks set forth in lieu of drinking cups.

I had just induced my father to go within to escape the heavy dewfall, and the mist which was creeping up from the river, when St. Leger arrived, accompanied by two soldiers whom he dismissed at the door. I tarried but a few moments, and then, leaving the old comrades together, blanket on arm climbed to the linden top. Here, where all the boisterous evening noise of the encampment was but a murmur, I gave myself up to thoughts of Margaret, and dreams that somehow all would turn out well. Ere long I fell asleep, to waken with a start and the consciousness that some strange sound had roused me. As I sat up, an owl hooted above my head, and flew blunderingly away toward the adjacent

woods. Though by no means superstitious, the presence of this bird of ill omen gave me a creepy feeling, and I descended from the tree as quickly as the darkness would permit. When I reached the block-house St. Leger was on the point of taking his leave, and I perceived that both men were somewhat under the influence of the strong Hollands.

My father immediately proposed that we accompany the commander to the fort entrance, and though I feared the night air for him I saw that opposition to his wishes would not be wise.

"Well, Wilton," said St. Leger to me familiarly as we set out, "I have everything arranged for you and for my old friend, your father."

"He has been too good, too generous!" my father broke in.

"Hold your tongue, Jack!" cried the commander. "You always would interrupt me, but damme, sir, I tell you flatly I won't have it."

"Your father, as you know," continued

St. Leger, turning again to me, "was formerly an officer in the king's service, and was forced by ill health to give up his commission. Now, inasmuch as he is familiar with army tactics, I attach him to my staff as one of my aides. I feel empowered to do this as I have full command of the expedition. A number of officers with me do not serve under me regularly, but have enlisted, or have been especially appointed for this campaign. With you, a civilian, the case is different, so I propose to employ you as my secretary to relieve Lieutenant Hamilton, who is now acting in that capacity. Though it is possible that I may call on you for other duties, you may, if you please, consider yourself my secretary. Your father tells me you are well fitted to fill such a post."

To the last of this speech, all of which was delivered in the grandiloquent manner of one half in liquor, I replied that I should endeavor to prove myself worthy of my father's commendation. I also thought it fitting that I should express my gratitude,

but he cut me short by launching into an exposition of his plans for sweeping down the Mohawk, seeming to take it for granted that the garrison at Fort Stanwix would speedily agree to such terms as he chose to offer. I was thankful that he did not question me on this point, or upon the probability of armed resistance to his march to Albany, for in his heated condition my opinion, had I spoken otherwise than most guardedly, might not have been pleasantly received.

Having bidden the commander good-night at the fort entrance, I drew my father's arm through mine and hurried him back to the blockhouse. Not since my mother's death had I seen him in such high spirits as he was after our return. This was in part due to the stimulant he had taken, in part to his meeting with the friend of his youth, and in part to the prospect of engaging in what, from his point of view, was to be a triumphant campaign.

I noticed that the excitement of the evening had made him feverish, but comforted myself with the thought that his condition

would pass off as soon as he fell asleep. I heard him tossing and muttering, and was considering the advisability of giving him such a potion as I had administered the night previous, when he grew quiet, and presently I heard him breathing like one in slumber, though with an occasional catch, as though there were some obstruction in his throat. Then I slipped away into unconsciousness.

Toward dawn I started suddenly upright. What I had been dreaming I never could recall, but I found myself in a cold perspiration, as though my visions had been harrowing. From my father's room came a faint spasmodic gasping. I tossed off the blanket, groped for the tinder box, lit the stub of our last candle, and sprang to the door between the two rooms. A cry of terror and horror escaped my lips. Blood dabbled the blankets of my father's bed, a little red stream was trickling from one side of his mouth, his eyes were fixed and protruding, and on his face was the livid hue that accompanies death by strangulation.

## CHAPTER VII

### *With the Advance*

**L**ATE in the afternoon of the 26th of July my father's body was laid to rest under the shade of the great linden tree. St. Leger read the burial service from the church prayer-book, and a military salute was fired in honor of the dead. My father's old comrade remained behind with me after the others had withdrawn, and then, when we had stood some time in silence, with a gentleness and delicacy of which I had not thought him possessed, led me slowly away.

My father's death seemed to touch St. Leger deeply, and his consideration for me for the time being quite won my heart. How one appreciates a little kindness at such an hour!

A place was provided for me within the fort, and all my effects brought thither, so that I did not again return to the scene of the previous night's agony and loss.



As I was retiring St. Leger came to my room.

"I know this spot will have nothing but bitter memories for you," he said, "and it has occurred to me that perhaps you would be glad to turn your back upon it at the earliest opportunity. I am sure it would be well for you if you are willing to do so."

Wondering what he had in mind, I answered that I would leave that very instant were such a thing possible.

"I am sending Lieutenant Bird forward with a detachment of the King's Regiment and a number of Indians, as a reconnoitering party, on the morrow," St. Leger went on. "You have already been over the route they are to traverse, and might be of assistance to the lieutenant. What say you, will you go?"

"How can I thank you for giving me the chance?" I cried.

"Don't think of that," said he. "I am serving myself as well as you. One of your former companions shall accompany you; then if Lieutenant Bird wishes to

communicate with me there will be trustworthy messengers. Whom do you prefer?"

"A Dutchman named Van Eyck, who is in Captain McDonald's company of the 'Greens.' He knows the country as a priest his breviary."

"Good! He shall be seen at once. The expedition will start at seven;" and with a warm pressure of the hand he left me.

Action—something that would take me out of myself, would cause me to forget a little my troubles and sorrows—this was what I longed for, and this providentially had been offered me. So resolutely had I banished from my mind the possibility of serving the patriot cause, it did not occur to me that night, nor indeed until some time afterward, that there was now no sacred duty that bound me to the side of the king.

When I strode down to the river-landing the next morning, after a mournful revery at my father's grave, I found thirty soldiers and twice as many Indians in readiness to embark. St. Leger and Sir John Johnson

were superintending in person the departure of the force. One *bateau* and several small boats had been assigned to the troops, while the Indians were to follow in their canoes. Lieutenant Bird, who had command of the expedition, proved to be an agreeable, wide-awake young officer, but little older than myself, for whom I at once conceived a liking. The lieutenant, Van Eyck, and myself were to lead in one of the small boats, and we got under way with military promptness.

St. Leger evinced at parting the same kindness he had shown me on the previous day, and assured me that when I rejoined the main force the position he had promised me should be mine.

Van Eyck was our pilot and guide, and took a very manifest pride in fulfilling the duties of his position. Lieutenant Bird speedily became interested in his eccentricities, and drew him into an animated conversation, so that most of the morning I was left to my own sad thoughts, though occasionally the warm-hearted Dutchman

would endeavor to divert and cheer me.

During our passage of the rifts near Battle Island the Indians were tractible enough, but directly after we had accomplished the tiresome portage at Oswego Falls they began to be troublesome. A number of the chiefs wished to encamp for the night, although there were several hours of daylight left, and it required a vast amount of persuasion to prevail upon them to move forward. This was the first of many trying experiences with our savage allies. On the following morning all efforts to hasten them were vain, and we pushed on as far as Three Rivers unattended. When, after much delay, they finally joined us, we discovered the reason for their dilatoriness. While we had been in camp several braves, under the cover of darkness, had returned toward Oswego, and, meeting a commissary division that had been sent forward to the lower landing at the Oswego Falls portage, had stolen six quarters of beef from the army stores. Now feast they would, in spite of all Lieutenant Bird

could say. A party of Senecas appeared at this juncture, and they proved as obdurate as the Missisaguas, so we left them to gorge themselves, and turned up the Oneida River toward Oneida Lake.

Van Eyck had worked himself into a violent passion over the behavior of the savages, and sputtered and stormed in Dutch, much to the lieutenant's amusement, though the latter was no less angry at their obstinacy. We followed the weary windings of the river until toward sunset, and paused for the night upon a grassy plot of ground beneath some large willows where we found the ashes of former camp-fires that told us the site was a favorite resting-place for the voyageur. At six the next morning we were in readiness to proceed, and as no Indians had appeared we continued on our way unescorted. By ten o'clock the heat had grown intense. Not a breath of air moved, a burning haze hung over the water, and the men had to change oars frequently to avoid sunstroke. Nor was there shade to afford temporary relief. The river-banks

were low, and wooded near the stream only with willow and elder thickets.

I was sitting at the stern of the boat, talking with Van Eyck, shading my face from the sun with a large lily-pad I had plucked from the water, when my companion suddenly gripped my arm.

"Look!" he said, in a half whisper, "but don't turn your head—there to the right where there's an opening in the thicket. Don't you see that tall grass move? There's a redskin hidden in it. I saw his scalp-lock a second ago."

I did as he bade me, and presently, just before we drew abreast of the spot, I beheld the face of an Indian cautiously raised above the grass. The eyes of all who were not at the oars were fixed upon a bend in the river which we were approaching. We were in mid-stream, yet by Van Eyck and myself the Indian's features were readily distinguished.

"I know that fellow," the Dutchman said; "he's an Oneida half-breed named Spencer, a Whig spy I'll wager a crown."

With that he caught up a musket that was resting against the seat in front of us, jerked it to his shoulder, and fired. The movement was one of incredible rapidity, yet the concealed redskin was quicker, for just before Van Eyck pulled the trigger there was a wavering of the long grass and a bending of the adjacent bushes.

"I gave him a scare, anyhow," laughed my companion.

Scarcely had he spoken when a tongue of flame leaped from the thicket not ten feet from the spot where we had seen the savage, and the man just in front of us dropped his oar with a cry of pain. He had been shot through the forearm.

"That bullet was meant for me," said Van Eyck coolly, proceeding to reload.

Several soldiers seized their guns and poured a volley into the thicket, and Lieutenant Bird turned to Van Eyck who had now risen as though waiting for him to give orders. The Dutchman was sharply scanning the trend of the shore-line.

"The redskin's on an island!" he ex-

claimed, after an instant's scrutiny; "pull your strongest, men, and we may catch him. There's no danger from his gun, for he's taken to his heels."

Lieutenant Bird shouted to the sergeant in the adjoining boat, bidding him watch the main channel, while our oarsmen for the first time that morning sent our craft swiftly through the water. Rounding a marshy point, we swept into a stagnant arm of the stream, half choked by lily-pads.

"Faster, men, faster," cried Van Eyck, his bronzed face aglow with excitement.

The rowers bent to their work, the perspiration streaming in great drops from their foreheads, the sound of their labored breathing indicating how strenuously they were exerting themselves; and yet for all their exertion our progress was slow as the pads and eel-grass impeded us, growing thicker and thicker with every stroke.

"There he is!" cried the man at the bow, as we shot around a projection in the island shore. And sure enough there the Indian was within fifteen feet of the bank



of the mainland, holding his gun above his head as he swam. He cast a backward look, saw us, and realized his danger just in time, for as he sank beneath the water Van Eyck's bullet threw up a shower of spray a few inches beyond the spot where he had disappeared. We watched for his reappearance in vain.

"He's caught in the eel-grass and will drown!" I cried.

"No such good luck, I fear," laughed Van Eyck. "There's but little grass over yonder where he dove, and as he can swim like a duck he's probably now safe in hiding under the bank somewhere."

"Shall we land and root the rascal out?" demanded Lieutenant Bird who had his mettle up, and was loath to relinquish the chase.

"It's no use, lieutenant," responded the Dutchman. "Ten to one he's given us the slip already. We may as well cry quits."

This episode was the first occurrence after our departure from Oswego that really roused me from my apathy, and

when we had regained the river proper I found myself cherishing a feeling of relief, nay, even one of pleasure, that the Oneida had escaped. I was sorry for the wounded soldier, however, and there being no one in the boat who could more skilfully care for him, I did what I could to make his wound comfortable.

So oppressive had the heat now become that when we discovered an inlet half girdled by a group of willows we pulled into it, although it was not without some misgivings that we did so, and finding no traces of the presence of an enemy rested here until the afternoon had well worn away. We were now quite near Fort Brewerton, but having consulted with Van Eyck and myself, Lieutenant Bird determined not to pause there. Accordingly we pushed on as far as Nine Mile Point which offered a desirable camping ground. Here, before we re-embarked on the following morning, a part of the Indians overtook us, and accompanied us to the mouth of Wood Creek. But it was not

until the dawn of another day, the first of August, that all of our troublesome allies appeared.

That night Lieutenant Bird called a council of the chiefs at which Van Eyck and I were invited to be present.

"Brothers," the lieutenant said, to the assembled sachems, "the White Chief has bidden me hasten to advance upon Fort Stanwix. In order that the fort may be fully surrounded, and our enemies receive no aid from without after our arrival, it is my wish that we march forward together. We have already delayed too long. We have loitered by the way, but now we must be swift to move. You have not forgotten the promises the Great Father beyond the sea has made to you. These promises will be kept, but the Great Father and the White Chief who commands us all expect that you will keep your promises as well."

This speech was received by most of the savages with nods and grunts of approval, and a number of them signified their willingness to accompany the lieutenant and his men on the morrow.

Finally a fierce and quarrelsome old Seneca, who went by the name of Commodore Bradley, rose deliberately, and said in the deepest guttural:

"Brothers; the young White Chief agreed, when we left Oswego, to give ear to our advice. It is not bravery but the deed of one lacking wisdom to march out from a secure shelter into an open space, and up to the mouth of great guns. It is the act of a fool. Moreover night is the time for the trail. No enemy can aim true in the dark."

"The ugly old idiot!" exclaimed Van Eyck, in an undertone. "Does he think we want him to storm Fort Stanwix in broad daylight?"

The words of the Seneca produced a marked impression on the other chiefs, and it required much explanation before the lieutenant could satisfy them that he wished to proceed only as far as the edge of the wood that surrounded the fort. At last, however, most of them agreed that they would co-operate with the troops and march at dawn.

As I lay upon my army blanket, with no roof above me save the rustling forest leaves, for the first time it came to me that my position was different from what it had been when my father was living. That this had not occurred to me before may appear strange, but looking back to this period now, after the lapse of many years, I realize that the shock of my father's death must have dulled and blurred my power of thought.

Who was left for me to consider save myself and Margaret? This was the question I asked myself in the quiet watches of the night. St. Leger? He had indeed been kind to me, but was it not solely for my father's sake? How long would his present attitude continue? Had not Sir John Johnson, in my absence, already prejudiced him against me? If the baronet had not yet done so would he not seize upon the first opportunity, and then, with St. Leger's favor withdrawn, what had I to hope for? Clearly my only chance of perfect security lay in escaping into the Con-

tinental lines—in joining the cause with which my heart had been from the outset. But how was my escape to be effected? The solution to this query baffled me, and I lay long pondering upon the matter, gazing with wide open eyes at the sparkling points of light visible through the rifts in the swaying branches; but the stars gave me no inspiration. On all other subjects I should have consulted Van Eyck unhesitatingly, and no doubt profited by his rough but shrewd advice. To approach him concerning what I had in mind would, however, as I well realized, be the sheerest folly, for he had the reputation of being one of the stanchest Tories in the Mohawk Valley.

It would perhaps have been madness to risk finding my way overland to Fort Stanwix by paths wholly unknown, yet with a willing companion how gladly would I have made the attempt!

The night wore on. I heard the murmur of the sentries' voices as they relieved one another, and at last fell into a light

slumber from which I was frequently roused by the stir of some one of the soldiers about me. At dawn the Indians again failed us. Commodore Bradley, had, for some reason, played upon their fears, and not more than half a dozen were willing to accompany the troops. Van Eyck swore fiercely, but previous experience had turned Lieutenant Bird into something of a stoic, and he bore his crowning disappointment admirably.

"I must send word to Colonel St. Leger," he said. "I fear I should have done so before. Brant and Claus and Sir John are the only ones who can manage these cursed savages. Aubrey, I shall have to ask you and Van Eyck to carry my message for me."

I went with Van Eyck to the creek and selected a canoe. Presently the lieutenant joined us, and gave his hastily written missive into my keeping.

"We shall make for Nine Mile Point," said Van Eyck, taking up the paddle. "The army should have reached there by this time."

He gave the light craft a vigorous shove from the bank, dipped the blade deep, and we went swiftly skimming down the stream toward the lake.



## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Fort is Encompassed*

I HAD become familiar with canoeing during my residence at the Flatts, but never before had I seen such a display of skill as was shown by Van Eyck that morning. A light wind out of the west had wakened the water from its night tranquility, and it was dancing in tiny golden waves to the soft music of the aerial minstrel. Over these waves sped our little boat like a winged thing. We crossed a wide bay, and then,—a panorama of varied greens,—the shores slid by until at length, as we approached the Nine Mile Point, the sunlight glinted on something white.

"They are there," I said, "I can see their tents."

"Umph!" growled my companion, "they are halting long enough to put the tents out, are they?"

"Only for a few of the officers, I pre-

sume," I answered, and this we soon discovered to be the case.

Several soldiers and Indians came running to the beach to greet us.

"Take me to the colonel," said I to a sergeant whose uniform I recognized as that worn by the men of St. Leger's regiment.

The commander was just rising, and came to the door of his tent half dressed. He treated me a trifle brusquely, as though he was vexed at being disturbed before he had made his toilet. I noticed that his hand shook when he took Lieutenant Bird's letter, and his eyes were bloodshot as though he had been free with his liquor the night before. He cursed roundly when he had scanned the written page, and told the sergeant to send Captain Brant to him at once.

"And, sergeant," he called after the soldier, who had turned to go, "give Mr. Aubrey and the man who came with him some breakfast. Most of the officers have breakfasted," he said in explanation to me, "and Sir John and I are to discuss plans over our coffee."

It mattered little to me how, or with whom, I ate, so long as there was some sort of a meal forthcoming. I had had opportunity for only a hasty bite at Wood Creek, and the canoe ride in the fresh morning air had made me ravenously hungry. While Van Eyck and I were devouring what the sergeant provided, an orderly appeared and handed my companion a letter.

"You are to bear this to Lieutenant Bird as soon as possible," he said, and then, addressing me, "The colonel desires you to remain, Mr. Aubrey."

I would much have preferred to accompany Van Eyck, for I had not been greatly pleased with the reception given me by St. Leger. There was, however, no other way but to accede to his wishes which I did without demur. I saw my companion depart, and presently witnessed the embarkation of a large number of Indians under Brant's command.

It was ten o'clock before I again had word with St. Leger. I was talking with Colonel Claus when he observed me.

"Ah! Aubrey," he said, "I wondered where you were. We shall all be moving within an hour. If you had been on hand last night I should have let you try your skill at your new duties. Come with me, and you shall see the proclamation Lieutenant Hamilton has drawn up under my direction."

I followed him to his tent, which two soldiers were engaged in taking down.

"This," he said, taking a paper from a leather case, "will, I flatter myself, bring the garrison at Fort Stanwix to terms."

I ran my eye down the long, closely written sheet in which the uprising of the colonies was characterized as an "unnatural rebellion," and those engaged in it were accused of "persecution and torture unprecedented in the inquisitions of the Romish Church." It was St. Leger's intention, so the manifesto stated, to "hold forth security, not depredation, to the country." In case, however, "the frenzy of hostility" remained, it was his declared purpose to execute "the vengeance of the state against the wilful outcasts."

Though his manner toward me was now kindly, my estimate of the man was vastly lessened after reading the pompous proclamation. The statement that he intended to "hold forth security, not depredation, to the country," with Brant and his savage horde as allies, struck me as being a sublime travesty on fact.

Could I, at St. Leger's dictation, pen such a document? I doubted my patience and composure were I put to so trying a test.

"I fear I shall prove but a poor substitute for your present secretary," I said. "I could never, save with your assistance, produce so telling a manifesto as this."

"My assistance you shall have," he replied, evidently pleased at the implied compliment to his powers of expression.

I was honored with a place in the *bateau* with St. Leger, Sir John Johnson, and Colonel Claus. The baronet rarely addressed me, yet there was nothing in his treatment of me, nor had there been since my father's death, to indicate that he cher-

ished any resentment toward me, or that he deemed me an object of suspicion. I knew the nature of the man too well, however, to be lulled by his unruffled exterior into a feeling of false security.

We reached the mouth of Wood Creek by the middle of the afternoon. Lieutenant Bird and his troop, together with the Indians under Brant, had gone on ahead to invest the fort that evening. It was decided that the main force should hasten forward as soon as practicable, so that a grand display might be made before the fortifications the next morning. Since we had traversed its tortuous channel a force from Fort Stanwix had rendered Wood Creek impassible, so that the engineers had a work of no mean magnitude to accomplish before the artillery could be transported. Obstructions must be cleared away and a temporary road cut, but it seemed best to delay these operations until after the army was permanently encamped.

Wearisome indeed was that night's march. Stumbling over roots and into bog holes,

tripping in the tough wire-grass, footsore, lame, we at last threw ourselves down wherever the ground was firm, near the Wood Creek extremity of the carrying-place.

Every one was glad to be stirring at dawn. There was no grumbling at the cold breakfast, so excited were all over the prospect of encompassing the enemy. It was a perfect Sabbath morning, cloudless and cool. Did it seem to any one, I wondered, that it was God's work we were bent upon?

As early as practicable the line of march was formed. The regulars donned for the occasion their bright new uniforms, which had not been taken from the packs since they left Buck Island. Five Indian columns constituted the advance, then came a detachment of the "Greens," next the main body of the army, with Indians on both flanks, and finally the rear-guard, which was made up of the "Greens" and the Rangers.

The command "Forward!" was passed along the line. The flags were unfurled, the bugles sounded, the drums struck up,

and amid wild shouts from the Indians we moved toward the fort, following the route of the carrying-place.

As a mark of special favor I was assigned by St. Leger a position beside Lieutenant Hamilton who appeared to resent my presence, and treated me with the superior supercilious air adopted by some army men toward civilians. It occurred to me that possibly he might be disturbed because St. Leger had made me his secretary, so I remarked that the position was not one of my own seeking, and that I had no wish whatever to supplant him. Without condescending so much as to glance at me he made me so rude a reply that I regretted my effort to be friendly, and was thereafter wholly silent.

As we emerged into the cleared space on the west of the fort we saw that the whole garrison had assembled on the ramparts to view our approach.

"A brave set they look!" cried Lieutenant Hamilton, with a sneer, and indeed the Continentals did appear a tatterdemalion



crew, some in rusty regimentals, some in the buckskin garb of frontiersmen, some in ragged citizens apparel. They seemed to be gazing at us with an air of stupification and wonder, but I learned later that they were merely intent upon counting our numbers.

An emissary bearing a flag of truce and a copy of St. Leger's proclamation was at once dispatched to the fort. No reply whatever being vouchsafed, active preparations for a siege were immediately begun. St. Leger selected the Wood Creek extremity of the carrying-place as his supply station, and placed over it a company of the King's Regiment as guard. On a ridge to the north-east of the fort he established his own headquarters, and, near by, men were ordered to throw up earthworks so that everything should be in readiness to mount the guns as soon as they arrived. Sir John Johnson and his command encamped just below the boat-landing on the Mohawk, while the Indians were stationed at intervals in the woods, thus making the investment complete.

During the day St. Leger employed me not only as his secretary, but also as his dispatch bearer, and I thus became familiar with the ground surrounding the fort. The first shades of twilight had fallen, and I had cast myself upon the grass on the brow of the slope where our camp was pitched, and was gazing longingly at the fortification not far distant, wishing I were within its walls, when I heard footsteps behind me. Glancing up, I saw St. Leger close at hand.

"Aubrey," said he, "I want you to go to Sir John's camp and tell the baronet to post some of the savages beyond the river. A reinforcement with provisions arrived last evening just before Lieutenant Bird reached the scene, and I desire to take every precaution to prevent further aid from entering the fort. Sir John may have issued orders to the Indians already, but I wish to make sure."

Bidding me hasten, the colonel turned and left me. Here was the very opportunity I had longed for, and my heart beat fast at the thought. As I lay looking at the fort

it had occurred to me that could I steal from camp unobserved and descend the slope I might possibly cross the low, marshy ground intervening, under cover of the reeds and elders and swamp-rose bushes, get within hailing distance of the sally-port, make myself known as a friend, and thus gain the shelter and safety I desired. There was danger, in the dim light, of being mistaken for a lurking Indian, and being fired upon by one of the sentinels, but this risk I was willing to run.

The commission which I had just received from the commander gave me ample excuse for the move I was about to make should I be observed by anyone within the British lines, so I rose without hesitation, slipped down the declivity, and entered the tangle below. The route I was taking was the most direct one to the baronet's camp, though by no means the easiest. Commonly a detour was made to the west of the fort, an open path on high ground.

A small stream which had its source in some springs to the east of our camp ran

close to the base of the ridge. Crossing this I followed its general trend, since before emptying into the river it passed within a few rods of the sally-port. I picked my way without much difficulty over the uneven ground, for the weather had been dry and only the deepest bog holes contained water. Coming at length to an opening in the thicket, I was forced to crawl on hands and knees to gain another cover where I might proceed in a crouching posture. I was now within range of the fort, and, in spite of the uncertain light, thought it wise to exercise the greatest caution. I was congratulating myself on the progress I was making, when, on putting back a thick screen of swamp-laurel, I found myself face to face with an Indian who was squatting upon his haunches in a grassy plot perhaps twelve feet in circumference where no shrubs were growing. He had evidently crept into his present place of concealment in the hope of getting a shot at one of the fort sentries.

I recognized the savage the moment I

put my eyes on him. There was no mistaking that malicious mouth. It was the very Indian whom Van Eyck and I had left bound in the wilderness. It was not at all strange I had not encountered him before, as he was but one of the thousand who were with the army. It was most strange and most unfortunate, however, that I should encounter him now.

He did not know me at once, for the shadow cast by the branches about my face added to the fast-thickening twilight shades. But as he continued to gaze at me a look of recognition passed over his ugly countenance. He put aside the rifle which lay across his knees, and drew his scalping knife. A swift chill went over me, for I was unarmed. It had not occurred to me that I should have occasion to use my pistols, and gun or sword would, I knew, be only an encumbrance.

There was no doubt that the savage meant mischief. The treatment he had received at the hands of Van Eyck and myself had been anything but tender, and

I was sufficiently well acquainted with Indian nature to realize that revenge would be his first thought.

Still holding back the branches, and keeping my eyes upon the Indian, I dropped upon one knee and ran the fingers of my disengaged hand, the right, over the ground. They came in contact (and I have always maintained that it was providential) with a gnarled root, at which I gave a quick tug. The earth was soft, and the root, a fragment of some long-dead tree, hardened through continuous contact with the water, was dislodged by my sudden effort. The savage saw my movement, but could not solve the meaning of it. I believe, however, that he fancied I was drawing a weapon, for he cast his knife at me so swiftly that I had barely time to duck my head. The knife was intended for my throat, but only damaged my hat and cut a furrow in my scalp just below my crown.

Maddened by the sting of pain, I did not wait for a renewal of the attack, but met my enemy half way as he was coming upon

me with his tomahawk. My blow was a true one, and as deadly as it was true. The knotted root, almost as heavy and hard as a stone, struck the savage upon the forehead between the eyes, and crushed his skull as though it had been an egg-shell. Backward he fell in a heap, his weapon flying to one side, one dull moan of agony escaping his lips.

Unthinkingly I staggered to my feet, my head and shoulders in full view above the bushes. I was not observed for an instant, then "crack" rang a musket, and the bullet sang by me with waspish viciousness. As I dropped to the ground several others cut the twigs about me, and I crept away from the spot toward the river with all haste, satisfied that any further effort to gain entrance to the fort that night would be futile.

## CHAPTER IX

### *The Baronet Shows His Hand*

**H**ATLESS and smeared with blood from the wound on my head, I finally reached the baronet's camp just as dusk was deepening into night. A sorry spectacle I must have been when I presented myself to Sir John and Colonel Claus, who were reclining before a small camp-fire which had been built to drive away the swarming gnats.

"Whom have we here?" cried the baronet in a peremptory tone.

I explained my errand and the cause of my plight in as few words as possible, stating in regard to my encounter with the Indian no more than the fact that I had been attacked by a savage.

"The redskin must have taken you for one of the enemy," said the colonel.

"The fellow doubtless belonged to the band I stationed beyond the river," com-



mented the baronet, indicating that he had forestalled St. Leger's wish.

My message delivered, I was turning to withdraw when Sir John remarked in a most sarcastic tone, "Perhaps we had better provide you with an escort, Mr. Aubrey, you seem to be so easily mistaken for a rebel."

"Thank you," I said stiffly, "I think I have proven that I can protect myself."

Still without a covering for my head, I strode swiftly away into the darkness, anger and dread grappling with my breast. I fancied I heard Colonel Claus say something in remonstrance to Sir John, and flung a hasty look back to see if the two had moved. The baronet had risen, and was apparently giving orders to a soldier who was facing him. I could not distinguish the man's face, but I saw that it was not the colonel.

My path led me in the direction of the fort, and as I passed one of the bastions there burst from the woods on all sides a wild chorus of whoops and yells that echoed

and re-echoed down the forest arches, and were flung back with demoniac fierceness from beyond the river. I will not deny that I was much startled, and it was with far from a feeling of perfect security that I continued on my way. The noise ceased almost as suddenly as it had broken forth, only to ring out again a moment or two later. Pausing to listen to the second outburst, I fancied I caught the sound of foot-falls hard behind me, and crouched down in a little hollow to see if my suspicions were correct. Presently a soldier came slinking along, and halted not ten yards distant, peering about him into the darkness. I crept toward him, and was almost at his side before he saw me.

"Give my compliments to Sir John Johnson," I said, "and assure him that his solicitude for my safety is quite unnecessary."

The man stammered some foolish excuse, and I left him standing there abashed and chagrined.

Preparations for the siege progressed briskly the following day. The battery on

the ridge was ready for the guns, and Sir John had thrown up a redoubt near the river. The Indians posted themselves in every conceivable place of concealment within rifle shot of the fort, and succeeded in picking off several men who were at work strengthening the ramparts. Night drew on, and still there was no opportunity for carrying out my cherished plan of escape.

On the morning of the 5th a part of the guns arrived, and were speedily put in place. A few ineffective shells were fired, and then St. Leger decided to wait until the whole battery was in working order. I had been unoccupied that morning as I had been a greater part of the day previous, and sat down to dinner with the younger officers of St. Leger's and the King's Regiment, to whose mess I had been assigned, moody and uncommunicative. I began to think I was destined to be a hanger-on in the besieger's camp for an indefinite period, since it was evident that, contrary to St. Leger's expectation, the

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siege was likely to drag itself out for weeks. Indeed I much doubted, as I had from the first, if it ever proved successful. The garrison certainly seemed bent on resisting to the last, and it was impossible to see how St. Leger could force the Continentals to capitulate.

Most of the officers whose mess I shared treated me with consideration, if not courtesy. Lieutenant Hamilton was the only one whose manner was unfriendly, and his studied rudeness both puzzled and annoyed me. As I took my place at the rough table where we were served, I saw from the expression of his face that he was more than usually sour-tempered, and for the first time, owing doubtless to my own disquieted mood, I found myself resenting his attitude toward me. Hitherto I had simply ignored it.

The conversation, whether by intention or chance I know not, turned upon the Tories and the assistance they had already rendered, and were likely to render, the king's cause.

Most of the officers, citing Sir John Johnson, Colonel Claus, and Colonel Butler as examples, were generous in praise of the zeal of these leaders and their followers.

"Granted!" cried Lieutenant Hamilton, "we have with us a zealous body of allies, but what I maintain is that these men are loyal exceptions. The main body of so-called Tories in the colonies are cowards."

"Folly! Hamilton, you don't know what you are saying!" exclaimed Lieutenant Hare. "Look at the New Yorkers!"

"They'd all turn coats quickly enough if our troops weren't in possession of the city," asserted the other. "Then take the interior of the country—this Mohawk Valley for example, where we are to march presently. Why don't these brave gentlemen there bestir themselves?"

"They need a Sir John to lead them, I suppose," some one suggested.

"Yes, and very careful they are not to make a move while the leader is still a few miles distant," sneered the lieutenant. "The fact of the matter is," he continued,

looking straight at me, "I have yet to meet a civilian who would fight unless he were driven to it. Your ordinary citizen has nothing in his veins but milk and water."

The insult was so unexpected and so fully unprovoked that I was too astonished to attempt a reply. Two or three of the officers glanced at me a little curiously, but I am sure it did not occur to them that Lieutenant Hamilton had any intention of deliberately affronting me. There was an awkward silence of a few seconds, then the lieutenant went on mockingly:

"Why, the sight of gun or sword is enough to turn the swarthiest civilian as pale as the commander's new secretary yonder."

If my face had worn a noticeable pallor (a thing natural with me when perturbed or down-spirited) it certainly changed hue, and that swiftly, at these words.

"It may be that the common citizen does love peace and dread war," said I, "but he at least has the speech and manners of a gentleman which, I regret to discover, is not true of a certain officer in his Majesty's service."

That the man had any purpose in provoking me to a quarrel did not enter my head, or I had made a violent effort to restrain myself, and had not spoken as I did. Several officers started to their feet as though to interpose between us. Lieutenant Hamilton, however, not a little to my astonishment, took my retort coolly enough. He eyed me with a chilly smile, and said in an even tone, as though it was a matter of small import,

"I'll prick your skin for that, my simple secretary."

"I'm very willing you should try," I replied, and just then Lieutenant Bird walked in upon us.

He was the only one of those present who had evinced for me any real friendliness, so I naturally turned to him.

"A little difference of opinion to settle, Bird, that's all," called Lieutenant Hamilton to him with a laugh, as I asked him to act for me in the affair.

He drew me aside, and listened with knitted brow to my account of what had happened.

"Hamilton's a quarrelsome fellow," he said, when I had finished, "but I don't understand this. He certainly can't have been drinking at this hour of the day. Have you ever done anything to provoke his enmity?"

"Nothing, unless it be that he is angry because St. Leger has made me his secretary."

"Ah! that may be it, though I remember he used to swear that he hated the part of a scribe—work, I have heard him say, fit only for a common clerk."

"However that may be," I answered, "this meeting cannot be avoided."

"Not if he will apologize?"

"He'll not do that."

"Certainly it isn't like him."

"But, my dear fellow," cried Bird suddenly, an unpleasant thought coming into his mind, "Hamilton's a skilful swordsman, and you——"

He stopped and looked at me in doubt.

"Are a novice, were you going to say?"

He nodded.



"It can't be helped," I said, not choosing to tell him I was by no means ignorant of sword-play.

Lieutenant Hare in behalf of Hamilton now approached, and after a few moments' consultation with Lieutenant Bird (an apology, as my second had surmised, being out of the question) it was arranged that the meeting should take place in half an hour in a little clearing in the woodland to the rear of the camp.

Though I had no fear as to the outcome of the encounter, being fully confident of my ability to give a good account of myself (my father had long ago told me I was a very apt pupil), I retired to my tent and penned a few lines to Margaret, in case the worst by any chance should happen. This missive, with brief instructions in regard to its delivery should aught serious befall me, I gave into the hands of Lieutenant Bird as we repaired together to the place of meeting.

It chanced that none of those engaged in the affair, either principals or seconds, was

on duty before three o'clock, so there seemed to be small likelihood of an interruption.

The spot selected for the encounter was well shaded, and there was little choice of position. Lieutenant Hamilton and I saluted each other formally, and then our blades crossed. As my grip tightened on the hilt of the good weapon with which my second had supplied me, and I heard the ring of the steel, my mind went back to the time when, in the little garden adjoining our old home in New York, I had first faced my father, and listened to and profited by his instruction. Many were the bouts we had had there in my youthful days; and later, at the Flatts, when my father no longer felt equal to the exercise, David and I (for David had once been a trooper in a German cavalry regiment) had frequently tried conclusions, with my father standing by as umpire and critic.

It had been several months since I had had sword in hand, yet my wrist was no less flexible than of old, and my arm, owing

to much tugging at oars, a shade harder than it was wont to be.

To give my antagonist the impression that my knowledge of the use of the sword was slight, I followed the clumsier German play used by David, and I saw a smile of scorn and triumph flicker about the lieutenant's lips as I, with apparent difficulty, parried one of his vicious thrusts, for he lost no time in making a vigorous attack. I have no doubt that the onlookers expected to see me spitted after a few passes, and the lieutenant, judging from his manner, was quite as confident as they.

My opponent was a good swordsman, and he was tricky. I discovered this fact very shortly, and the prick he promised to give me I certainly got, though it was but a scratch upon the left arm. He now pressed me closely, evidently intending to end the contest then and there; but I did not for once lose my coolness, and as I parried some of his most dexterous thrusts I saw the expression of his face begin to change. He was no longer the confident bully. He was surprised, nay, I think, amazed.

It had been my intention from the first, if fortune were with me in the fight, to let him feel the point of my sword somewhere not in a vital part, and then disarm him. This, I knew would be a crowning humiliation; as for killing the man, I did not give such a thought an instant's harborage in my mind, though I am sure that he, on his part, would not have felt the least compunction had he run me through the heart.

With a suddenness that confused my antagonist I changed my tactics and presently had him wholly at my mercy. A nervous fear clutched him, and he went as pale as a strip of parchment. One moment the point of my weapon bit deep into the fleshy part of his left shoulder, and the next his sword was flying through the air, while a terrible oath fell from his lips.

Then while the little clearing yet resounded with the clash of our weapons, St. Leger, Sir John Johnson, and half a dozen others burst upon the scene. So intent had our seconds been upon the combat that they had not heard the sound of approach-

ing footsteps, and we, the combatants, would not have been aware of it had ten thousand men been marching down upon us.

"What did I tell you, colonel?" cried Sir John with a wave of his hand toward where Lieutenant Hamilton and I were standing.

I saw by the contracted lines of his face that St. Leger was upon the verge of a violent passion, and it came to me in a flash that I had been the victim of a plot deliberately laid by the baronet to ruin me. He had been shrewd enough to see if he could involve me in a duel, whatever the outcome of the encounter might be, I would be disgraced in St. Leger's eyes. Lieutenant Hamilton, jealous of my preferment, had been a willing tool.

"Mr. Aubrey," said the commander sternly, "you may consider yourself under arrest."

"What is the charge against me?" I demanded.

"You stand here facing one of my officers, with your sword in hand, and ask

such a question?" thundered St. Leger.

"I was not the cause of the quarrel. Question any of those present when it took place if you do not believe me," I said.

Lieutenant Bird was about to speak when Sir John Johnson signed to him to be silent.

"The young man has a smooth tongue," said the baronet to St. Leger.

"And he has a sharp sword," I cried, quite beyond myself with anger, "that could teach you the same lesson that it has taught your protege, Sir John Johnson."

"Silence!" shouted St. Leger. "Another word, and you shall be court-martialed."

This brought me to my senses. Reluctantly I gave up my sword, and submitted to be led away to the camp, where I was assigned to a small tent not in use, and a guard stationed at the door. Here I spent the afternoon, with no companion save my own depressing thoughts.

## CHAPTER X

### *An Unexpected Meeting*

**T**HAT Sir Johnson had woven about me a net from which I should find it difficult to escape, I had no doubt. He had suspected me from the outset to be friendly to the cause of the Continentals, though he evidently had no proofs to make good his suspicions. He hated me on account of my inadvertent reference to his flight into Canada, and my conduct toward him, on at least two occasions since our unfortunate encounter that evening at Oswego, had surely not tended to temper his anger. He had maliciously set about to disgrace me in St. Leger's eyes, and he had succeeded. I realized that any attempt to justify myself would be useless. The officers who were present when the quarrel took place would hardly dare say a word in my favor, at the risk of incurring the baronet's enmity,

even though they believed me to be in the right.

What charge would be brought against me? Had the military tribunal, with which St. Leger threatened me, any authority over my actions? It seemed to me not, and yet I knew only too well that the commander-in-chief and his associates could and would do what they chose with me. I racked my brain to conjecture what this would be, but came to no conclusion as the afternoon wore to a close.

A few of my belongings were, at my request, brought to me, the guard was changed, and I was given a frugal supper, but St. Leger did not come to question me, nor did I have opportunity of speaking with any one save my attendants and guards.

About sunset I noticed a stir in the camp. I was not allowed to move from the tent, but I could see much that took place from the doorway. Soldiers stood in groups talking earnestly, and officers hurried excitedly to and fro. It was clear that something was on foot. My guard was pardon-



ably curious, and fidgeted and fretted because no one passed near. Finally he caught sight of one of his comrades who had come on an errand to an adjoining tent, and called to him:

"What's the news?"

After a little the man walked toward us, casting a doubtful eye at me as though debating the advisability of speaking in my presence.

"Indian runners have arrived from down the valley," he said reservedly.

My guard joined him a few yards away, and they talked together in low tones, but I caught enough of their conversation to give me the clue to what had happened. A force was marching to the relief of the fort, and Sir John Johnson, with a small body of troops and a large number of Indians, was going to set out that night with the intention of surprising the enemy as they advanced upon the morrow.

Could I warn the Continentals? The thought leaped into my mind, but I realized, after a moment's consideration, that even

were I free this would be well nigh impossible. Every one in the whole camp was on the alert, Sir John was doubtless even now mustering the savages, I was unfamiliar with the valley road (a rough wagon trail at best), and would be more than likely to go astray in the darkness.

If I could not warn the approaching Continentals I could at least take advantage of the excitement their coming caused, and this I resolved to do. I felt sure that the minds of St. Leger and the baronet would be diverted from me, orders to guard me might be less stringent, and an opportunity to slip away might occur. For this opportunity I determined to watch.

My guard was changed at midnight, and I discovered with delight that the newcomer had been drinking. I resolved not to allow myself a wink of sleep, lest by so doing I should miss the chance for which I was eagerly waiting. It was very difficult many times to keep awake, for the occurrences of the day had told severely upon my nervous forces; yet by calling all my

will power into action I managed to fight off each attack of drowsiness, and while I frequently appeared to be unconscious, was in reality never so.

For a time my guard strode up and down. Then he seated himself and lighted his pipe, at which he pulled vigorously, occasionally taking a generous draught from his capacious flask. He glanced in at me now and again, as I lay rolled in my blanket, muttering under his breath and probably wishing I were as lifeless as I appeared to be.

At last the gray light of coming dawn began to show. This was the hour for which I had waited. It was now if ever, that I must try my fortune. The wind had blown up rather fresh during the night, and I had fastened down one flap of the tent doorway. Across the narrowed entrance my guard was half reclining, his back turned toward me. Presently he raised himself, gazed at where I lay, listened to my breathing, and then, with a sigh, stretched himself out at full length.

Ten minutes must have elapsed before I dared to stir, and what anxious moments they were! I had already cut one of the ropes by which the tent was fastened to the ground, and my plan was to escape by raising the canvas at this point. I did not wish to risk a struggle with the soldier, unless driven to such an extremity, for a single cry might bring a dozen of his comrades to his assistance.

With what infinite caution I slid from my blanket! How carefully I lifted the canvas of the tent and began to worm my way under it! Every little rustle caused my heart to leap, and when something dry crackled it was as though a thunder-clap had sounded. I was in a cold sweat when I at last stood without my prison. There were other tents to pass, and there might be a sentry to avoid, but the time for caution was gone. I must now be quick and bold, and trust to my heels and to my lucky star. And there it was, the morning star, bright above the distant hemlocks. Its clear rays gave me hope; the sight of it seemed a lucky omen,

Light of foot, I sprang by the neighboring tents toward the open space that led to the border of the forest. I saw no one, and heard no challenge. A instant later I was among the trees—safe. What course should I follow? During the long night I had in a measure thought it out. I had decided that if I escaped I would strike for the cedar swamp a little southwest of the fort, and there conceal myself. My further action must be shaped by later developments.

The east was fast kindling with the fires of dawn. I knew I must cross the clearing to the west of the fort while yet the light was dim, and bent every effort to that end. The birds had begun their matin song in the thickets, and were startled into silence as I sped by. I passed to the rear of the battery on the ridge, ran several rods farther to the west, then pressed to the edge of the open land. No alarm had been sounded, so I was certain that my guard still slept.

The outlines of the fort were taking form

in the gray air as I started on my flight toward the swamp. My footfalls stirred fresh odors from the long grass. The dew soaked my gaiters, and the briers tore at my hands. I roused a rattlesnake near a decayed stump, and startled a rabbit, which gave me a thrill of fright, for from the sound I took it to be an Indian. I bounded across the line of the carrying-place, and saw before me the slight declivity that led to the swamp land. I could have shouted loud and long for joy. It seemed to me that I went down that slope on wings. With a swift plunge I was deep among the cedars, and for the first time since my escape from the tent I paused to take breath.

After I had rested, I found myself a snug hiding-place in a clump of thick trees, and, reclining against the trunk of the largest, ate half of the store of hard biscuit I had saved from my evening meal. While thus engaged the sky began quickly to brighten, and peering up through the green gloom I beheld the first glow of the sun.

Almost before I had finished breaking

my night-long fast, sleep came upon me. Now I made no resistance. Indeed, had there been reason for resisting, I much doubt if I should have been able to hold out for any length of time. The strain I had passed through had been most severe, and nature would assert itself.

It was ten o'clock when I awakened suddenly, all my senses alert. Into the drowsy quietude of the place there had come a sound. Was it caused by a wild animal making its way from point to point, or was it an Indian? Intently I listened. I had little fear that I should be discovered, so dense was my place of concealment, and I knew no redskin had stumbled upon my trail, for the noise proceeded from the opposite direction—from the depths of the swamp. The spot where I lay was about midway between two Indian encampments, so I could not conjecture why any of the savages should be prowling about with such caution in my vicinity. Moreover, I supposed that most of the Indians had gone out under Sir John Johnson to surprise the Continentals.

Presently it grew clear to me that some creature, man or beast, was drawing near my hiding-place. For a time I would hear nothing save the far-off chirp of a bird, then there would come a suspicious rustle, or a twig would snap. I parted the branches upon my left and looked out. Between the clump where I was reclining and the next dense growth of cedars was a space dotted with hillocks of marsh-grass. Into this space, in single file, advanced three men, cautiously stepping from one secure footing to another. The first I had never seen. He was dressed in homespun, and wore a cap of squirrel skin. He cast his keen eyes from side to side as he advanced, and held his rifle ready for instant use. In the second comer I recognized Adam Helmer, a Whig well known at the Flatts, while the third, to my great amazement, was my friend John Demooth.

Here was fair fortune indeed, but how was I to make my presence known without alarming them and imperiling myself? The risk of discovery which they were taking



was great, and every man of them would be swift to strike if he fancied danger threatened.

I let the leader and Helmer pass without attempting to reveal my presence, but when my friend was opposite where I was hidden I softly whispered his name. He did not hear me, so I spoke again, this time louder. Both he and Helmer stopped and raised their guns.

"Who speaks?" cried Demooth, his face blanched with suspense.

"A friend," I replied.

"A friend here!" he exclaimed. "In heaven's name who are you?"

I parted the branches and stopped forth into view. Demooth gasped and staggered back.

"You! You! How—" he began, when Helmer interrupted him.

"An ambush!" he cried. "It's that damned young Tory, Aubrey," and up went his rifle to his shoulder.

"Fool," said Demooth, striking aside his weapon, "he is no more a Tory than you are!"

Helmer began to mutter, but Demooth silenced him.

"I know what I am saying," he declared, then he sprang forward and we embraced each other.

"You are not a ghost after all, he said, laughing and gripping my hand. "But how in the name of wonder come you here, when every one supposes your body to be somewhere at the bottom of the Slanting Waters?"

"It's a long story, and will keep till we are in a safer place," I answered, "though now that most of the Indians have left camp I fancy there's little danger here."

"Where are the savages, pray?"

"Why, they marched off last night, with some of the troops, under Sir John Johnson and Brant, to meet your advancing force."

"Are you sure, Aubrey, are you sure?" cried my friend in alarm.

"I know it to be so," I said.

"By heaven, I fear they'll surprise General Herkimer!" exclaimed Demooth.

"Never fear for old Honikol," said Helmer, "they'll not catch him napping."

Nor indeed would they have done so had it not been for his impatient and mutinous officers who forced him to order an advance when his good sense told him to await the signal for concerted action from the fort.

"You bear messages to the commander of the fort?" I asked.

"Yes," Demooth replied. "We were despatched last night by General Herkimer from our camp near the Oriskany Creek, but missed our way in the darkness."

As he spoke he began to move forward, I at his side.

"Is all well at the Flatts?" I inquired.

I saw by his hesitancy in replying, brief though it was, that there was something he would keep back.

"All will be well when you appear again," was the answer he made me.

I forbore to question him further, for our movements now demanded our closest attention, but I made up my mind that at the earliest opportunity I would insist that nothing be concealed from me. My joy at the prospect of a speedy release from a

position of peril was clouded by a sense that fate might have in store for me still another blow.

We soon reached the edge of the swamp, where Demooth, Helmer, and their companion tied their kerchiefs to the ends of their rifle barrels. We sprang swiftly up the slight acclivity to the line of the carrying-place. Happily between us and the fort not a soul was in sight. Without hesitation we dashed forward, the three messengers waving their improvised truce-flags as we ran. Soon there was a rousing cheer and friendly shouts of greeting from the ramparts, and when we rounded the salient which protected the entrance we found the gates open to receive us.

## CHAPTER XI

### *The Sortie*

WITHOUT delay we were conducted to the quarters of the commanding officer, Colonel Gansevoort, where we were immediately shown into his presence. He was at the time conferring with Colonel Willett, the officer second in command. Both men received us warmly, and listened with eager interest to Demooth's messages from General Herkimer.

The sortie which Herkimer desired was at once agreed upon, though Colonel Gansevoort expressed grave doubts as to its efficacy in diverting the attention of the enemy, owing to the fact that the messengers had been so long delayed.

"Have the men paraded at once," he said to Colonel Willett, "and call for volunteers to the number of two hundred and fifty to take part in the sortie. The signal

guns announcing to Herkimer that his messengers have arrived should meanwhile be fired."

Colonel Willett hastened out to execute these orders, while we remained for further conference with the commander. The bearing of these officers impressed me much. By their energy and alertness they showed that they were soldiers, every inch of them. Though Colonel Gansevoort was but little older than myself, he had wisdom far beyond his years. He had won distinction with Montgomery at Quebec, and a more valourous and determined officer for his present trying position could not have been found. Having heard a brief outline of my story, he expressed the warmest sympathy for me, and gave me his fullest assurance that I was welcome within the fort. He questioned me closely in regard to the numbers and position of the enemy, and I was glad to be able to give him information which he regarded as most valuable.

Shortly after the echo of the signal guns died away we followed Colonel Gansevoort

from his quarters, and found the whole garrison on parade. Colonel Willett was addressing the men.

"Soldiers," he said, "General Herkimer is on the march to our relief. Your commander believes that some of the enemy's forces under Sir John Johnson, and their Indian allies under Brant, have stolen away during the night to meet him. Sir John's camp is therefore weakened. As many of you as are willing to follow me in an attack upon it, and are not afraid to die for liberty, will shoulder arms and step one pace forward."

Two hundred at once responded to this call, and at the second appeal the additional fifty who were desired volunteered.

As I listened to Colonel Willett's speech, and saw the quick response with which it was met, a sudden desire filled me. Walking quickly to where he stood, I saluted him.

"Have you room for one more recruit?" I asked.

He did not understand the motives that

prompted me as did Colonel Gansevoort, yet he acceded promptly to my wish.

"Yes," he answered. "Let this man be enrolled in Captain Van Benschoten's company.

The officer named greeted me civilly, and assigned to me a place in the ranks. As we stood awaiting orders, I saw that the west was ominous with dark banks of clouds. With marvelous rapidity they came rushing toward the zenith. Every second the sky grew blacker. At length there was a flash and a roar, as though a battery of an hundred guns had opened fire.

"To shelter, men," shouted Colonel Willett, and we sought cover with all haste.

For nearly an hour the storm raged, and during this time I was enabled to quiet the gnawings of my stomach, which had grown rebellious under long neglect. The sun came out from behind the rack burning hot, and the ground began to steam with vapor. The moment there was a gleam of sunlight we again gathered under arms,



and a three-pounder was unlimbered for action.

The success of our undertaking depended upon quick movement, for the sentries at Sir John's camp, who could be plainly seen from the ramparts of the fort, would speedily discover us and give the alarm. Much to my delight I found the position assigned to me was in the advance guard. It would have been a grievous disappointment had Captain Van Benschoten's company been detailed to protect the rear.

The gates of the fort were quietly opened, and we emerged at double-quick. The ground was slightly descending, and as we charged down with a fierce determination, the sentries caught sight of us, and fled without firing a shot. So completely did we take the enemy by surprise that the soldiers at that time in camp had no opportunity to form an organized resistance. A scattered volley, which did no damage, greeted us, and then there was a general rush for the river.

I fancied I caught sight of Sir John John-

son flying, hatless and coatless, in a most undignified and precipitated fashion, but as I knew he had marched out at the head of the troops the night before I concluded I must be mistaken, unless for some reason he had delegated the command to one of his aides, and unexpectedly returned.

Discharging our muskets at the fugitives, we dashed exultantly into their encampment.

"This way to Sir John's tent!" I shouted to an officer of about my own age who chanced to be near me, Lieutenant Stockwell, as I afterward learned.

"Lead on!" cried he, and into the headquarters of the baronet I plunged with a fierce delight. I confess, though it is little to my credit, that the spirit of retaliation, of revenge,—call it by what name you will,—was hot within me. I recalled the contemptible means Sir John had employed to degrade and humiliate me, and overturned his private belongings with a reckless glee that surprised my companion.

"This will be entertaining reading!"

I exclaimed, as I pulled forth and displayed Sir John's orderly book. "I will present it to Colonel Willett." I was true to my word, and I believe that gallant officer has the Tory baronet's army record in his possession to this day.

While we were rummaging among Sir John's effects a part of the force had overrun the adjoining Indian encampment and driven the few savages, who had failed to accompany their comrades, into the woods. This victorious party now returned, laden with blankets and arms. So great were the spoils captured that Colonel Willett was obliged to send a squad of men to the fort for several old army wagons, which had long ago been used in transporting stores, that the booty might be more easily removed. Three times were these wagons loaded and unloaded before everything had been transferred within the ramparts. A vast amount of camp equipage was taken, together with stores, clothing, arms, ammunition, and five British standards. These last-named trophies were discovered by

Lieutenant Stockwell and myself. Various private papers—memoranda and journals—were also found which gave desirable information to the besieged.

While the wagons were being loaded for the last time a small force from St. Leger's camp appeared upon the opposite side of the river. Major Badlam opened upon them with the three-pounder, and they hurriedly retreated out of range. Presently, however, they were reinforced by a troop under St. Leger himself, and advanced firing upon us. But their shots were ineffectual, and as everything was now in readiness, and nothing was to be gained by an engagement with the river between, Colonel Willett gave orders to retire. This we did, discharging a parting volley, which checked the enemy from further aggressive demonstration. St. Leger was in a violent passion. I distinguished his voice issuing angry commands, and concluded that he had been communing with his boom companion, rum.

Those of the garrison who had remained

within the fort received us with great enthusiasm, while the commander congratulated Colonel Willett and complimented the men.

"We should raise a flag in honor of our success," said Willett.

"True," returned Colonel Gansevoort, "but we are so unfortunate as not to have one."

"We can make one!" exclaimed Willett, who was a man of many resources, and hurrying to his room in the commandant's quarters, he soon returned bearing a blue camlet cloak which he had taken from a British officer in an engagement near Peekskill. To this he added from the clothing among the booty two scarlet coats and several white shirts.

"There," cried he laughing, "is the material for our flag," and he dispatched Lieutenant Stockwell to summon a sergeant who was known to have considerable skill with a needle.

On the 14th of June Congress had adopted the stars and stripes as the design for the

national flag. Although this action had by no means become generally known throughout the country, Colonel Willett had heard of it, and so was able to superintend the making of the banner. It was ready before sunset, and amid the enthusiastic cheers of the garrison was flung to the breeze from the southwestern bastion, with the five captured British standards beneath it. So far as I have been able to learn this was the first time the flag we have now all grown to love was raised upon the land. Thus did the sortie become, in more respects than one, a memorable event.

The company to which I had been assigned in the attack upon the British camp was ordered to assist in disposing of the booty, and I thought it incumbent on me to lend a hand. This task accomplished, I endeavored to find my friend Demooth. Failing in this (I afterward learned that he had fallen in with an acquaintance, and gone to view a gun which was being operated from one of the bastions), and chancing to meet a soldier whom I recognized as

one of my comrades in the sortie, I begged him to tell me where I could rest for a few hours. He was good enough to take me to his quarters in the barracks, and there, worn out by my long watch of the previous night, and by the exciting events of the day, I fell into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

That evening I was more successful in discovering the whereabouts of my friend, and together we went to walk in a secluded spot beneath the western ramparts. Late in the afternoon the absent troops and the Indians had returned to the British encampment, and the latter were now showing their rage over the losses they had sustained, for it will be recalled that a part of our force had plundered their camp during the sortie. Their shouts and whoops rose with a vengeful fierceness through the stillness of the night, and ever and anon a futile volley would suddenly be directed at one of the bastions from some sheltered spot in the forest. Here and there in the shadow near us the sentries were crouching, keeping a watchful lookout the while, and a subdued

hum floated across to us from the barracks and parade-ground where the soldiers were discussing the events of the day.

"Now for your story," said Demooth.

Anxious though I was to question him in regard to Margaret, I decided first to satisfy his curiosity, and beginning with my last night at the Flatts I gave him a detailed account of what had happened to me. He listened intently to the whole recital, rarely interrupting me save with some exclamation of sympathy or indignation.

"There's the hand of Providence in all this!" he cried, when I had finished. "Mark my word, Wilton, everything will turn out happily for you. Even now events are shaping themselves to that end. You must realize that your father's life could not, under the most favorable circumstances, have been greatly prolonged. How much better it was for him to slip away as he did, than to live to witness the disappointment and failure that are bound to attend this expedition under St. Leger! I tell you



it can't succeed. Think of the hardships, too, that he would have been forced to endure!—for the tide will turn presently, and there will be a marching back, and not a triumphal progress to Albany.”

“Yes,” I said, “I thought of what my father had been spared when I was confined in disgrace under guard, and was thankful he was not there to witness my humiliation—though it may be had he been present Sir John would not have dared to carry out his spiteful revenge.”

“Don't delude yourself! It would only have pleased him the more.”

“But Sir John and my father were friends. In fact it was the baronet who sent word to my father that the expedition was under way, and bade him come to Oswego to join it.”

“True enough, but evidently he had not taken you into consideration, and when he found you upon the scene he mistrusted you at once. You were impolitic enough to make him your enemy, and revenge to Sir John Johnson is sweeter than a score of friendships.”

I was silent, for I felt Demooth was right. Then I changed the subject suddenly.

"Tell me about Margaret," I said.

He must have known that some such request would come, yet it seemed to put him ill at ease.

"What is the trouble?" I asked, now really alarmed. "Is she not well?"

"No, she is not," he replied. "That is it. I fear your supposed death may have affected her mind. And yet I believe she is sane enough save on one point. She says her brother is a murderer, and has not spoken to him since that night. Poor fellow! I really pity him, though he did treat you abominably."

"You see," my friend went on, "it came about in this way. Herborn told me himself. When he and the others who had pursued you returned from the Slanting Waters, Margaret met him at the door and boldly demanded where you were. He had been intending to take her to task for meeting you had the outcome of the pursuit been different, but under the circum-

stances had not the heart to do so. He did not attempt to conceal from her, however, the fact of your supposed drowning. When she heard this she told him he was a murderer, revealing to him in a wild burst of emotion that you were not a Tory, but chose to assume that position out of love for your father and fears for his health should he discover the truth. This statement Herborn did not at first believe, thinking you had deceived Margaret, but later, when the poor girl was recovering from the shock—”

“Recovering!” I cried.

“Yes, she kept her bed for two weeks. When she was able to sit up she refused to see her brother, and still called him a murderer. He came to me in his trouble, and I assured him what Margaret had said in regard to you was true. Then a realization of how he had misjudged you and ill-treated you came over him, and he began himself to feel that he had been the cause of your death. His repentance and grief were so sincere that both my sister and

myself tried to effect for him at least a partial reconciliation with Margaret, but to no avail. He is obliged to absent himself from home, his presence affects her so seriously, and when my sister saw her a few days since there was no mention of his name."

"And is she changed?" I asked hesitatingly.

"Alas! she is. But your reappearance will bring the old look back."

"Would I might start for the Flatts this very night!"

As I said this the vindictive Indian war-cries rang out, wilder and fiercer than ever, and the impossibility of carrying my wish into effect smote me to the heart.

## CHAPTER XII

### *The Tarry Within the Fort*

**A**S my friend and I were returning from our promenade beneath the ramparts, we passed the commandant's quarters, and Colonel Willett who was standing at the door recognized and hailed us.

"We have bad news of General Herkimer's force," he said. "Come within."

We followed him to an inner room where we found Colonel Gansevoort scanning a letter by the light of two sputtering tallow candles. He gave us a cordial greeting, and handed the missive upon which he had been intent to Demooth.

"I should say that communication was dictated, and written under force," commented the latter, passing it to me after he had hastily run his eyes over its contents. "Provided the British were the victors, which I am not willing to admit, St. Leger

has by some means induced his prisoners to exaggerate his success."

"That's exactly Colonel Willett's opinion and mine," said the commander.

The missive had been delivered by Colonel Butler about an hour previous with a verbal demand to surrender. It was from Colonel Bellingher and Major Frey, officers in General Herkimer's command who had that day been captured. In it Colonel Gansevoort was apprised of the defeat, with great loss, of General Herkimer's army, and of the death of many of the leading officers, including the General himself. The strength of the besiegers was dwelt upon and surrender advised.

"We'll at least wait until morning," said Colonel Gansevoort, with a smile. "You are not especially anxious, I presume, to rush into the arms of your old friends to-night?" he added, as I returned to him the letter.

"No, I think I shall rest better where I am," I answered. "My bed in St. Leger's camp would be anything but one of ease."

When I reached the room in the barracks where I had been lodged, I found some of the men of Captain Van Benschoten's company gathered about a soldier named Fulmer, a wiry, cadaverous fellow who had marched upon my right in the sortie.

"Clement was shot there night before last," I heard him say, "and Buell three nights ago. I tell you I don't fancy it. You may call me a coward if you like, but I don't believe it's real cowardice to be afraid of a ball in the dark. Why, I'd rather stand up in broad daylight before a whole regiment."

I knew that Fulmer's bravery was beyond question, and saw that the men sympathized with him.

"What's he speaking about?" I asked of one who stood at the edge of the group.

"He's on for late guard duty tonight in the northwestern bastion, where two men have been shot, and he doesn't like the prospect. None of us would," the soldier answered.

Something I had noticed the night St.

Leger sent me to Sir John Johnson's camp flashed into my mind, and I pushed my way to where Fulmer stood.

"What time do you go on guard?" I inquired.

"Two o'clock," he answered, recognizing me at once.

"I'll stand guard with you, if you care to have me."

"Care to have you! Give me your hand on it. You're either a mighty brave man or a fool."

"Oh, no, neither! only a chap with an idea."

They were all curious to know what my idea was, but I would not gratify them by revealing what I had in mind. Telling Fulmer to procure a tall stake, and a mallet or hammer with which to drive it into the earth, and bidding him call me when he turned out, I tumbled into my rough bunk and was soon sound asleep.

The Milky Way was a spangle of dancing light as I left the barracks with Fulmer. By day I should have presented a grotesque



appearance, for under one arm I carried a soldier's hat and coat which I had borrowed, and under the other a tightly corded bundle of straw. My companion had carefully followed my instructions, and with our respective burdens we made our way to the bastion. The sentry who was relieved did not, in the darkness, notice our singular preparations, and departed with a gruff good-night. Fulmer pointed out to me the spot where the two men had fallen.

"Here the stake should be driven," I said.

"I knew what you were up to," he announced, "the moment I saw the coat and hat."

It was not long before we had constructed a dummy that by one standing a few rods distant, provided the light was not too strong, might readily be mistaken for a man.

"Now we'll observe what develops," said I, and stationing ourselves near an embrasure we awaited the first glimmer of dawn.

As the earliest hint of a break in the night showed itself, I bade my companion

summon a gunner, and when the man came, I asked him to load the four-pounder which stood in the central angle of the bastion with grape and canister. Then I requested him to stay within call.

Fulmer and I returned to our vigil with redoubled intentness, and presently, the veil of gray that shrouded all things, growing thinner, our watch was rewarded. The sharp crack of a rifle rang out, and our straw sentinel gave a quick jerk as the bullet struck it. From the bushy top of a black oak which every one had supposed to be out of rifle range a little cloud of white smoke curled slowly upward. The gunner responded promptly to our call, the gun was trained on the tree top, and, ere the echo of the report had died away, a dark form came crashing to the earth. Thus were the two soldiers avenged.

"They'll not try that game again!" cried Fulmer gleefully, and he spoke truly, for thereafter the sentry in the northwest bastion was unmolested.

It must have been ten o'clock when John

Demooth came to awaken me, saying that Colonel Gansevoort would be glad of my presence at his quarters. Hastily making myself presentable, I repaired thither, and found the commander and several officers awaiting me. The apartment where they had gathered had been darkened and candles lighted. As I entered, my eye fell upon Colonel Butler, Major Ancrom, and another British officer whose name I did not know seated opposite the doorway. At sight of me Colonel Butler started to his feet.

"I protest against the presence of that person at this interview," he exclaimed in a passion.

"Mr. Aubrey is here at my request, and will remain," said Colonel Gansevoort calmly.

The eyes of the two men met for a moment, then the Tory colonel shrugged his shoulders and resumed his seat. I was given a chair, and then wine and cakes were passed in ceremonious silence. Truly it was a curious scene. The flickering

candlelight cast wavering shadows on the faces of all present, and undoubtedly accentuated the gravity of the occasion. Presently Major Ancrom, who was the spokesman of the deputation from the besiegers, rose and addressed Colonel Gansevoort.

"I am directed," he said, "by Colonel St. Leger, the officer commanding the army now investing this garrison, to inform you that he has, with much difficulty, prevailed on the Indians to agree that if the garrison, without further resistance, be delivered up, with the public stores belonging to it, the officers and soldiers shall have their baggage and private property secured to them. And in order that the garrison may have a sufficient pledge to this effect Colonel Butler accompanies me to assure them that not a hair of the head of any of them shall be harmed."

Here he turned to Colonel Butler.

"That was the expression the Indians used, was it not?" he said.

"It was," answered the colonel.

He then continued, still addressing his remarks to Colonel Gansevoort.

"I am likewise directed to remind you that the defeat of General Herkimer must deprive the garrison of all hope of relief, especially as General Burgoyne is now in Albany."

This lie in regard to the whereabouts of General Burgoyne was undoubtedly a part of St. Leger's plan of intimidation.

"Sooner or later," the major went on, "the fort must fall into our hands. Our commander, from an earnest desire to prevent bloodshed, trusts the terms offered will not be refused, as it will not be in his power to make them again. It was with great difficulty that he persuaded the Indians to consent to the present arrangement, since it will deprive them of plunder, which they always set so much store by on similar occasions. Should the terms proposed be rejected," and here the major spoke more deliberately, and with added emphasis, "it will not be possible for Colonel St. Leger to restrain the Indians, who are much exas-

perated and very numerous, from plundering property and destroying lives. Indeed they threaten to march down the country and burn the settlements and slay their inhabitants. Colonel St. Leger ardently hopes that these considerations will have due weight with you, that you will be induced, by complying with the terms now offered, to save yourself from future regret when it will be too late."

Colonel Gansevoort signed to Colonel Willett, who sat next to him, and the latter rose to reply. His blue eyes were blazing with indignation as he looked Major Ancrom squarely in the face.

"You say, sir," he began, "that you come from the colonel who commands the army investing this fort. By your uniform you appear to be a British officer. Your speech—stripped of its superfluities—amounts to this: that, if this garrison is not surrendered, your commander will let loose his Indians to wreak their devilish cruelties on defenseless women and children as well as men. Let him reflect, should he do this, that

their blood will be upon his head, not ours. We are at the post of duty. This garrison was entrusted to our charge, and we will take care of it. After you leave the fort you may turn and look at its exterior, but never expect to step within its walls again unless you come as a prisoner. I consider the message you have brought a degrading one for a British officer to send, and by no means reputable for a British officer to carry. For my own part I declare, before I would consent to deliver this garrison to such a murdering set as your army, by your own account, consists of, I would suffer my body to be filled with splinters and set on fire, a practice in which, as you are aware, the horde of children-and-women-killers who belong to your army take particular delight."

There was a murmur of applause from the Continental officers present when Colonel Willett concluded.

"Am I to understand that this is your reply?" cried Major Ancrom, turning to Colonel Gansevoort, his face fairly livid with rage.

"You are," was the answer.

"By God, you'll regret it!"

"Not if there's any justice in heaven."

We all thought the conference was now at an end, but after a few more bitter words had been exchanged, and the British officers perceived that their brow-beating tactics would avail nothing, Major Ancrom proposed, on behalf of St. Leger, an armistice of three days. After Colonel Gansevoort and Colonel Willett had conferred, this proposal was agreed to. The British officers were then blind-folded, as they had been when they came, and conducted outside the fortifications.

The three days of the armistice proved to be an interval of sore trial to my spirit. Forced to inaction, I was left a prey to the gloomiest forebodings in regard to Margaret. Notwithstanding Demooth's assurances that she would speedily be herself again on my return, I began to picture her with unbalanced mind, wandering, Ophelia-like, from room to room. So possessed did I become with the idea that unless I could immedi-



ately reach her she would lapse into a state of decline, and become permanently demented, that my friend with difficulty dissuaded me from attempting to pass alone through the enemy's lines by night.

"Think what it would mean if you were captured!" he said to me. "Do you imagine, that you, a deserter, one who has incurred the enmity of Sir John Johnson, would escape with your life? You would be handed over to the tender mercies of the red devils, and die in agony at the stake. Why can't you be patient? The siege is sure to be raised shortly, for they can never take the fort, and a few days will make no difference in Margaret's condition."

But be patient I could not, nor could I agree with him in regard to what change even a brief time might make in the state of my beloved.

About noon on the fourth day after the sortie, as I was crossing the parade-ground, I met Lieutenant Stockwell with whom I had grown to be on very friendly terms.

He gave me a cheery "good-day" and held out his hand.

"It is good-by as well as good-day," he said seriously. "I am off with Colonel Willett to-night on a dangerous mission—that is if the night be favorable."

"Whither," I inquired, "if it be no secret?" for I suddenly suspected what they were about to attempt.

"We are going to try to get through the enemy's lines," answered the lieutenant, "and raise another force down the valley for the relief of the fort. Colonel Willett, you know is much thought of in Tryon County."

Here was the very opportunity I coveted.

"Would the colonel consent to my joining you in the undertaking, think you?" I asked.

He shook his head doubtfully.

"You can speak with him," he replied, "but I very much doubt his consent. A third would materially increase the danger of discovery. Then have you considered the risk? Should we be taken your fate

would be sealed. We might possibly get off with our lives, but you would not have the slightest chance."

"I have reasons for being willing to run every risk."

I suspect I was terribly in earnest, for his manner changed at this.

"Well for my part," he said. "I'm perfectly willing you should join us. You'll find Colonel Willett with the commander."

When I was shown in the two men were discussing the proposed venture. I stated my errand at once, but at first neither would listen to my request. However, when I explained more fully my reasons for wishing to be one of the party, and they saw how much it meant to me, they had not the heart to refuse. So I passed from the depths to the heights, from despair to the serenity of hope, at a single bound, such magic changes will a turn in the tide of events make in the human heart!

## CHAPTER XIII

### *A Perilous Venture*

THE night proved most auspicious for our undertaking. Tumbled masses of a murky hue hid the stars and a sobbing wind was stirring among the trees, when, hard upon midnight, we crept out of the sally-port, and began making our way cautiously toward the river. A short distance up the stream I recalled having seen a number of logs floating in an eddy near the bank, and thither we bent our steps with the intention of using the timber to assist us in crossing. Several years previous there had been a saw-mill near by, and the logs were undoubtedly some that had been hewn and floated down, but found too defective for use.

Having, without incident, gained the point we sought, each one of us divested himself of his coat, his breeches, and his

foot-gear, and fastened his possessions securely to a piece of water-logged timber. Thus we pushed from the bank, the colonel and Lieutenant Stockwell taking the lead. So black was the night we could but faintly distinguish the outline of the opposite shore. Not a sound did we hear save the sough of the wind and the hoarse murmur of the current. For some reason the Indians were silent. It was our plan, after crossing the river, to strike for a distance to the north of the stream, then to return, and follow its course to the Flatts.

At first we had little difficulty in keeping near one another, but in mid-current I was caught in a strong swirl and separated from my companions. My log was so heavily water-soaked that it proved hard to manage, and when I reached the shore I had no idea where the colonel and Lieutenant Stockwell had landed. The bank was slippery with slime and, after having floundered noisily in one spot in my attempt to find them, I concluded that rather than further endanger my safety by still

endeavoring to discover their whereabouts it would be better to strike out for myself. I selected what seemed a likely place to gain the land, and was crawling noiselessly up out of the water when my hand fell upon the bow of an Indian canoe. I had chanced upon one of the points of communication between the two shores.

In an instant my plans were changed, and I decided that I would appropriate the canoe and follow the river to the Flatts. I groped about but could not find the paddle. While I was considering what I should do, I heard footsteps approaching, so there was no choice left but to take to the river again. This I did, drawing the canoe after me. If I could not avail myself of it, I could at least prevent another from putting it to use, perhaps to my peril.

The current swept me swiftly away from the spot, and while with one arm I gripped fast upon the log, with the other I kept firm hold on the canoe. I soon realized, however, that this method of procedure was impracticable. It was impossible for

me, while in the water, to transfer my clothes, which were bound tightly to the log, to the canoe, and without a paddle the little craft was useless; so, although not without regret, I let it slip from my grasp. I now conceived the bold idea of keeping in mid-stream, and drifting past Sir John Johnson's camp and the redoubt he had erected on the river-bank to guard the carrying-place. I felt confident that even the sharpest-eyed sentry would discover nothing suspicious in a log floating with the current, if, indeed, in the thick gloom he saw it at all.

For a time all went well. In fact, I was about congratulating myself that I was safe, when my log encountered a snag and became so wedged among the debris collected by the obstruction that I began to despair of getting it loose. I could hear a sentry pacing his beat upon the bank, and consequently had to be most guarded in my endeavors to free my tree-trunk pilot. I was on the point of abandoning it, when, by a supreme last effort I suc-

ceeded in parting it from the rest of the mass of wreckage, and went drifting on again unobserved.

I now began to feel the effects of my long immersion, and yet I did not dare to leave the river. I was fully a third of a mile from the carrying-place before I ventured to quit the stream, and then it was with difficulty that I could pull myself upon the bank, so exhausted was I. Unfastening my clothes from the log, I took a deep swallow from the flask I had had the forethought to bring with me, a draught that set my blood stirring. Then I wrung out my dripping under-garments, re-clad myself, had a second pull at the flask, and set out to seek the Albany road, for I had risked landing on the south side of the river.

It was not long before I found the rough highway which had been cut through during the French and Indian War, and over this I went stumbling blindly and weakly, intent on putting between myself and the fort as great a distance as might be before dawn.



As I paused where the road dipped into a swale, just as the night was lifting, I detected the foul odor of carrion. The sickening smell grew when I began descending, and presently, with a startling swish of wings and a furious clamor, a great flock of crows swept upward to the hemlock tops. Upon the scene of what dread tragedy was I advancing? I hesitated, but considering that if I turned back and sought another route I might lose myself in the wilderness, I pressed resolutely forward. As I reached the base of the declivity where the road—logs laid in the mire—crossed the swamp-land, a wolf with an angry snarl sprang from my path into the tangled thicket.

I could see but dimly, yet I now knew that I had come upon the battle-field, the spot where Herkimer and his men had encountered Sir John Johnson and the Indians. Before me was heaped a pile of corpses, friends and foes who had expired in the death grapple. Here lay one who had fallen face downward in the swale, only his

legs being visible; there was stretched another, the lower portion of whose body was immersed, the ghastly and distorted countenance being lifted skyward.

When the grisly horror of it all smote me, a temporary strength was infused into my tottering limbs. I leaped over the prostrate forms; I fled up the opposite slope, panting, straining, as though all the fabled fiends of the under-world were at my heels. But this effort was the last desperate brightening of a dying flame. I blundered from the roadway into the woods, reeled a few paces among the trees, caught my foot upon a projecting root, and fell forward at full length. A vision of Margaret seemed to dance before my eyes, and then came the utter blackness of oblivion.

When I recovered my senses the wood was humming with the noises of mid-day. Every bone in my body ached, and my head snapped with pain. Crawling into the sunlight, I propped myself against a mossy hillock, and there I laid for hours with closed eyes. The sun-bath proved an

excellent medicine, for late in the afternoon my head ceased its terrible throbbing, and the rackings pains left my joints. The nausea which I had experienced on awakening also disappeared, and I was able to partake sparingly of the cheese and hard biscuit which I had brought with me. Moreover, I discovered a spring welling up in a mossy basin close at hand, and the copious draughts I had from it helped materially to relieve my distress.

Further progress that day, however, was out of the question, so I set about making myself as comfortable as possible for the night. From the scrub hemlocks I cut up great heaps of boughs, and, burrowed among these, I slept restfully and soundly. I was much encouraged the next morning to find how little soreness remained in my limbs, and after breakfasting (I managed to eke out my meal with blackberries, which grew about me in abundance) I set out toward the Flatts, having first cut a stout hickory staff to prop my steps.

I made a brave start, and flattered my-

self that I was going to progress famously, but I very quickly discovered that I had little endurance. I was forced to pause frequently to rest, and when sunset came had traversed scarcely ten miles. I did not allow myself to become disheartened, however, impatient though I was to look into the eyes of my love, to hear her voice, and to know once more the heaven of her kiss.

Casting about for a place to pass the night, I finally selected a willow copse close to a ford in the Mohawk, and not very far distant from the site of the present thriving town of Utica. Hard by, on the river bank, was a clearing used as a camping-place by travelers on their way to Fort Stanwix, and the west and north. I was debating whether I could with safety start a fire, when I was startled and astonished to hear the murmur of voices. Creeping to the edge of the clearing, I was just in time to see appear from the direction of Fort Stanwix a dozen or more white men and nearly as many Indians. The leader

of the party was Walter Butler, the son of Colonel Butler, at this time a lieutenant in the "Rangers," and later one of the most bitter and cruel of all the Tory leaders. Much to my surprise, and not a little to my regret, I discovered that my quondam companion and friend, Van Eyck, was acting as guide to the expedition. That they were bent upon some sort of mischief I had no doubt, and I resolved to thwart them if I could.

From my hiding-place I watched them make hasty preparations for supper, and, as fortune would have it, during their meal Butler, Van Eyck, and several others sat within ear-shot, so that I was able to catch detached scraps of their conversation.

"You know this man Shoemaker?" I heard Butler say. "There's no doubt about his loyalty?"

"Not the slightest," returned Van Eyck. "He's true to the core. His house, as I think I told you, is a mile and a half, or thereabouts, from the Flatts, and is just the place for a meeting. No one will dream of our presence there."

"You think the gathering will be a large one?"

"I am certain of it. Our coming has been announced to all sympathizers with the king's cause by the most trusty messengers. The affair is sure to be a great success."

"Certainly the proclamation should influence any who are halting between two courses of action."

"Aye! it should, and will, if there chance to be any such present."

Here a third broke in with something that failed to reach me, and I could not gather the drift of what followed. Soon, however, Butler turned to Van Eyck again.

"Eight is the hour for the rendezvous, I think you said."

"Yes. It seemed best to wait until dusk, though there's not the slightest danger of an interruption."

"We shall not need to make an early start, then."

"No, it would hardly be wise. Mid-day will be quite soon enough. We are much

less likely to be observed here than in the vicinity of Shoemaker's."

This was all I cared to know. I stole from the spot, and when I finally stretched myself out for the night, on a wooded slope fifty yards from the highway, I was fully a mile from the Tory and Indian encampment.

I felt quite myself on the following morning, and set my face toward my goal soon after day-break. I was forced, however, to take a long rest at noon-tide, so afternoon was waning before the houses of the Flatts met my view. As I caught sight of the familiar rude and unpainted buildings, tears started to my eyes, and a wave of emotion swept through me. "At last," I thought, "I am nigh unto my heart's desire."

For the present I was anxious to escape recognition, so I slouched my hat over my brows, kept my gaze averted, and affected a limp that was wholly unnatural. The scraggly growth of beard upon my face aided in the disguise. A settler whom I

knew slightly met me at the outskirts of the Flatts, and took me to be one of Herkimer's force who had been wounded and left for dead, and was now making his belated way homeward. It was from the lips of this man that I learned the brave General Herkimer was still living, though sorely wounded, and had not been slain in battle, as Colonel Bellinger and Major Frey had reported. Alas, that this valiant soldier and patriot was not destined to recover, but was fated to lose his life at the hands of a bungling surgeon!

After I had passed unrecognized through the first encounter I took courage, and went more boldly forward. Fortunately for my purpose the afternoon was sultry, and there were few folk abroad.

Without further challenge I reached the fort. Here I felt more at ease, for I was quite unknown, save possibly by name. To the guard at the gateway, who demanded my business, I replied that I wished to see the comander of the post. The fellow regarded me with suspicion, which caused me



no surprise, for I realized that I looked like a veritable outcast. However, he summoned an officer who chanced to be within hail, and as the latter approached I addressed him.

"I have important news for your commandant," I said. "Will you take me to him at once?"

"Whence do you come?" he asked.

"From Fort Stanwix."

"Ah! then you are the young man of whom Colonel Willett spoke."

"Yes, I left Fort Stanwix with the colonel and Lieutenant Stockwell. Are they here now?"

"No, they went on toward Albany this morning to meet General Arnold, who is marching to the relief of the fort."

I was shown into the presence of the commanding officer, Colonel Weston, who, when I revealed to him my identity, was exceedingly gracious.

"Colonel Willett and Lieutenant Stockwell feared that the most serious of all mishaps had befallen you, Mr. Aubrey—

that you had fallen into the hands of the Indians."

"I should certainly not care to repeat my experience," I said, "though I was at no time in actual danger of being captured."

Then I gave him in brief an account of my adventures. When I told him I had overheard the plans of Butler and his companions his genial face glowed with satisfaction.

"We'll prepare a little surprise for the lieutenant; eh, Mr. Aubrey?" cried the delighted colonel. "I suppose you wouldn't mind having a hand in it after you have had some dinner and rested yourself a bit! And, by the by, you look as though dinner were the thing of which you were most in need."

"I have been doing a hermit's penance for two days and a half," I replied, "and wouldn't at all object to trying the part of the returned prodigal."

He laughed merrily at this, and bade me be his guest. When I sat down at the plain yet plentiful board a brush and a razor had

wrought a decided change in my outward appearance, and when I rose there was quite as great a change in the inner man.

“I must see this affair through, “I thought, “for I cannot well avoid it, and then—Margaret!”

## CHAPTER XIV

### *At Shoemaker's*

THE garrison of Fort Dayton was made up of scarred and hardened veterans of the Massachusetts line. For the expedition which we were about to undertake fifty picked men were enrolled, and placed under the command of Captain Borring, the officer who had conducted me to Colonel Weston. Promptly at eight o'clock we left the fort. The captain, by whose side I marched, proved himself to be a most agreeable companion. He entertained me by his nimble wit, and showed by his conversation that he had a lively fancy for an adventure. He pressed me with questions in regard to my recent experiences, lamented Herkimer's misfortune, berated the general's injudicious aids who were responsible for what had at first threatened to be an irretrievable disaster, grumbled that he was confined to garrison

duty when he longed to be in the field,— in short until we reached Van Eyck's Rift, where we were to cross the river, he kept up such a vivacious flow of talk that I had no opportunity to inquire as to his proposed plan of procedure.

When we stood upon the opposite bank of the stream, however, his manner changed. Gathering the men about him he issued a few sharp orders.

"You will march forward in double file," he said, "until I give the word to halt, and there must be no talking in the ranks."

"My idea," he continued, in an undertone, turning to me as we led the way, "is to let the Tories have a chance to become fully engrossed in their counsels, and then walk in and seize them red-handed, as it were."

A spectral vapor had risen above the river and marshes, and through widening strips of it we needs must pass as we held upon our course. It filled the air with a chilly dampness that caught one by the throat, and I was heartily glad when we

gained higher ground. Here, however, the noises of the bottom lands still kept pace with us,—dismal, hoarse, and eerie croakings, that often seemed to fall into time with our footsteps.

“Egad, but that’s a mournful tune to march to!” said Captain Boring, beneath his breath. “It would give one the blue devils before moonrise.”

These were the only words I heard spoken (save a smothered execration from one of the soldiers who set his foot into a rut or boghole) from the time we left the river bank until we halted at the mouth of a wide gully about two hundred yards from the Shoemaker house. At this point the captain commissioned me to act as guide. I had several times penetrated a considerable distance into the gully in search of partridges, and recalled once, on returning from one of these excursions, I had climbed a ridge upon the right that had been denuded of trees, and come out in the rear of the Shoemaker farm buildings. Although the night had measurably thickened during

the last quarter of an hour, I had full confidence that I should be able to detect the spot where I had left the gully. Just above it, at the base of the declivity, the spring torrents had laid bare a bed of clay which shone almost chalky white in the daylight. Even in the dark it could hardly fail to catch the eye.

It turned out as I had anticipated. The clay-bed made a clearly distinguishable line in the gloom, we scaled the ridge without accident, and descended into a little glade where there was a young apple orchard. Leaving the men here, Captain Borring and I crept forward to reconnoitre. We advanced with extreme care, thinking some of the Indians might have been posted as guards, but it soon became evident that the Tories had not deemed such a precaution necessary. We had about concluded that no watch whatever had been set, and were congratulating ourselves on the fact, when the rear door swung back to admit a tardy comer. It was closed instantly, but the flood of light that for a

breathing space streamed out (all the windows had been completely darkened) revealed the figure of a solitary sentinel. There was no mistaking the thin form and the eccentric attitude. The man was Van Eyck.

"We shall have to dispose of that fellow," said the captain. "Do you keep an eye on the house while I bring up the men."

"Very well," I answered.

Nothing could have fallen out more favorably for my design. I had previously decided that if Van Eyck were captured with the others I would intercede with Colonel Weston in his behalf, for I would not have it supposed that I was so ungrateful as to forget the debt I owed him. Here, however, was an opportunity to allow him to escape. Could I prevail upon him to accept the chance? I resolved to try.

As soon as the shadows had enveloped the captain's form I slipped from the shelter of the wood-pile, where we had halted, to the well-sweep, and thence to the corner of the house. Passing with all



possible haste to the front of the building, I struck into the path by which the late arrival had approached, and stepped briskly and unhesitatingly toward the door where Van Eyck stood guard.

"Halt!" said he. "Your name."

"Mr. Van Eyck, is it not?" I returned, disguising my voice.

"Van Eyck it is, but speak up! Who may you be?"

"One who would have a word with you before he enters."

"Well, out with it!"

"Not here. Come a pace or two aside. I have my reasons."

He hesitated a second, then, grunting assent, retired a short distance. Following him closely, as soon as he paused I spoke in my natural tone.

"Are you quite sure you don't know me?" I asked.

He clutched me by the arm, and thrust his face so near to mine that I caught the steely glint of his eyes.

"By God, it's Aubrey!" cried he. "How

come you here? They told me you had deserted."

"They told you the truth," said I, it being my purpose to withhold nothing from him. "My heart was never with the king's cause. It was solely on my father's account that I fled to Oswego."

"And you were a Whig all along?"

"Yes."

"Then why, in the name of—" He broke short. The reason for my presence dawned upon him.

"Damnation!" he hissed, in a rage, "you've got us trapped!"

"Hush!" I cried. "There are fifty armed men within call. In two minutes—three at the most—the house will be surrounded. Now the way is clear. Quick, go!"

"Go, and leave my friends unwarned! That's not old Van Eyck's kind of a trick, young man," and he endeavored to push by me.

I was not easily put aside, however, and laid hold upon him desperately.

"You are in the enemy's country," I exclaimed, "and if you are taken it will be hard to prove you are not a spy. They hang spies.'

He halted in indecision.

"The Whigs of the Flatts have little cause to love you," said I. "They will show you but scant mercy."

"It would be a coward's act," said he.

"What have you to gain?" I cried. "Your warning can avail nothing."

I was now in a panic lest he should hesitate until it was too late.

Suddenly he started. His keen ear had detected a suspicious sound. Captain Boring and the soldiers were evidently approaching. He wavered, swore under his breath, then grasped my hand and pressed it until I cringed.

"You've bested us," said he, "but I forgive you. Good-bye; you've seen the last of old Van Eyck." So he vanished in the night, nor, indeed, did I ever put eyes upon him, or hear aught of him, again. But I have kept his rough presence green

in memory, for despite his violent prejudices and uncouth ways he was true at heart, and a firm friend in the time of sore trouble.

Van Eyck gone, I turned in the direction of the wood-pile. As I drew near I was aware of a figure standing alone in the gloom. Instinct told me it must be the captain.

"Are the men all here?" I asked.

"Yes," replied he, "but what of the sentry? Is he still on guard?"

"No, he has taken to his heels."

"How's that?" demanded he, in astonishment.

I had no knowledge how he would receive my explanation, nevertheless I resolved I would be perfectly frank with him.

"I knew the man," I said, "and was deeply in his debt. There seemed to be a chance to square accounts, and I took advantage of it. I pledge you my word he was only a poor instrument. The leading spirits are within."

"I don't blame you in the least," was the captain's only comment upon my confession, and he showed his consideration and confidence in my good faith by never afterward referring to the matter by so much as the slightest hint.

A cordon was now drawn about the house. Word was passed bidding the men be on the alert, and then Captain Borring threw back the door. With swords loosened and pistols tightly gripped we strode through the narrow entrance into the room where the gathering had assembled. Lieutenant Butler was in the midst of his harangue.

"Let a deputation be sent at once," we heard him say, "advising the garrison at Fort Stanwix to surrender."

At this instant his eyes fell upon us, and he ceased speaking.

"Threachery!" he shouted, springing from the chair upon which he was mounted. "Out with the lights!"

"Hold!" cried Captain Borring, presenting his pistol. "The man who moves does so at his peril. Resistance is useless, gentlemen; the house is surrounded."

Dismay and chagrin smote the crowd. At a word from the captain, I stepped to the door and called in a sergeant with a squad of men. Such of our prisoners as carried arms were relieved of them amid muttered oaths and vain protestations. At first I was not recognized, but presently a whisper spread among our discomforted captives, and exclamations of reproach and anger assailed me from all sides. The hiss of "traitor" was loud in my ears, and Lieutenant Butler approached me menacingly, his hands clenched and his handsome face dark with scorn.

"Doubtless we have you to thank for this," said he.

"You flatter me, lieutenant," I replied. I had never fancied his plausible, insinuating, patronizing ways, and could not forbear answering him as I did.

"It was an ill hour when the Slanting Waters gave you back to life," said one who dwelt in the vicinity, and who shared the general belief at the Flatts that I was dead. This sentiment appeared to be unanimous

among the Tories, but I was in no wise cast down thereat.

With a few exceptions those from the immediate neighborhood who had given heed to the call issued by Sir John, Colonel Claus, and Colonel Butler were allowed to depart with the admonition that they keep the peace. The others were marched away to the fort to await the arrival of the expected expedition of relief from Albany, and the action of court-martial.

## CHAPTER XV

### *My Home-Coming*

**A**T the gateway of the fort I took leave of Captain Borring. I had been much pre-occupied during our return march, and although I endeavored to answer my companion's sallies, he being at the very top of a gay mood, I realized that I made but lame work of it. In truth, now that I considered my duty done, my mind was too full of my beloved to give more than a moment's harboring to other thoughts. Had her health further declined since Demooth left the Flatts? Should I be able to see her that night? How should I manage to reveal myself to her and to her mother without causing them alarm? These and kindred queries passed and repassed through my brain as I hastened along the valley road. It was no longer dark, for the moon had burst through the fleecy clouds in the south east, and illu-



mined the earth with a pale silvery glow. The crickets were chirring loud in the stubble, but save for their rhythmic cheer a great calm possessed the air.

I went forward, hat in hand, letting the refreshing breeze out of the west play about my temples, my breast filled with conflicting emotions—with courage and with fear, with the gravest misgivings and with the fondest hopes. A light in the lower windows of the house of Farmer Demooth encouraged me to think that I might find Margaret and her mother still astir. I quite forgot my fatigue, and struck into a swinging Indian lope. Even then I could not keep pace with my desire which winged ahead of me like an unjessed bird. When I reached the boundaries of the Herborn estate my mind reverted to my last tryst with Margaret. Naturally in this connection the figure of her half brother obtruded itself upon me. John Demooth had told me that Herborn was with one of the companies under Herkimer's command. Doubtless he had participated in the san-

guine conflict in the ravine at Oriskany. Had he come off unharmed, I wondered, and if so, after what manner would we greet one another when we first encountered? That we should ultimately grow to be good friends I had no doubt, but I could not deny to myself the possible awkwardness and constraint of our first meeting.

The sight of my beloved's home caused all consideration of Herborn to vanish from my thoughts. With renewed speed I bounded forward. Was it the glimmer of a candle that I saw, or was it but the delusive moonlight slanting upon the window panes? Alas, it proved to be the latter! As I paused in front of the house something in the silence smote me with dread. I opened the gate and passed into the yard, my eyes upon the windows of the room which I knew Margaret occupied. Was she there? Ah, what would I not give for one glimpse of her sweet face!

"Margaret!" I called softly. The sound melted into the night. Again I spoke her name, and waited. There was no response.

I walked to rear of the house, and looked about, but found no sign of a living thing.

"Why should there be at this hour?" I meditated, yet I could not rid myself of the notion that all was not right. Not a breath of noise came from the stables. Everywhere was the same ominous quiet.

My mood was one of uneasiness and depression when I again sought the road, and though I tried to reason myself out of my low spirits as I slowly retraced my steps over the ground I had trod so buoyantly a brief time before, I had but poor success. Repeatedly I assured myself that I had not the least cause to be disappointed or disturbed. How could I expect, I argued mentally, to find two women astir at such an hour, for it was now considerably past the stroke of ten! The stable boy, and the man who assisted Herborn in cultivating the place would naturally both have retired. All this was perfectly plausible, but the gloom would not lift, and the fact that there was no longer a light in the windows of the Demooths added to my dejection.

My feet seemed weighed down with lead, and when I reached the gateway of the fort I was ready to collapse. The sentry admitted me, and I stumbled to the room in the officers' quarters which Colonel Weston had been good enough to place at my disposal for the night. There I cast myself upon the cot and slept the sleep of sheer exhaustion.

My condition was more normal when I went out beneath the sky of the morning. It was one of God's own days, full of the tonic of youth. From rim to rim of the heaven there was not a film of vapor. In the dewy fields, beyond the fort and the houses of the Flatts, bird voices were raising melodious matins.

I joined several of the officers at mess, and received the hearty thanks of Colonel Weston for my share in the capture of the previous evening.

"We shall wish your testimony when the court-martial sits," concluded the Colonel.

"I am wholly at your service," said I. "You will find me, when you wish me, at

my father's place. I shall doubtless go up there sometime during the day."

Before breakfast was over I grew uneasy to be off. The calling of my heart would not let me be still. Once a-foot, I flung out a laugh at the remembrance of the previous night's folly and fear. I swung on toward the house of the Demooths, knowing that I was the bearer of good news from their son, as blithely as ever sped the bringer of joyful tidings. I quite forgot that I was not supposed to be in the land of the living, and when I saw Farmer Demooth ("Farmer" he was often called, although why no one was able to say) crossing the road several yards in front of me, driving some of his cattle toward the pasture opposite the house, I holloaed to him loudly. He stopped in mid-road and looked at me, took a backward step, shaded his eyes first with one hand and then with both, started forward a few paces and threw up his arms. He was coatless and corpulent, and an on-looker might have fancied he was about to fall into some sort of a fit.

"I declare," he cried, "if it isn't Wilton Aubrey! Why, lad, we thought you were dead."

As I came up he gave me an honest hand-grip, and I knew he was glad I was in the flesh.

"Come in!" said he, "come in! My soul, what will the women say!"

He allowed me no chance to speak, but began calling to his wife and daughter, pulling me in the meanwhile toward the house.

"Martha!" he shouted, "Bertha! see who's come back to life!"

Finally the two women heard his cries, and appeared in the doorway, Bertha Demooth hard at her mother's heels. Both of them regarded me in speechless amazement.

"Arn't you glad to see me again?" said I. "I bring you good news of John. I left him but a few days ago in Fort Stanwix."

"John! Fort Stanwix!" the three echoed. "You have been there!"

Then they all laid hold upon me, and I must perforce go in and relate to them the chief facts of my story, listen to their exclamations and answer their questions, while every moment of delay was torture to me. Finally I could bear it no longer, and turned to Bertha Demooth.

"Margaret," said I, "what of her?"

"Margaret!" repeated she, "then you don't know?"

"Know what, in heaven's name?" said I, springing from the chair in which I had been seated, an awful fear clutching at my heart.

"Why, she's gone, she and her mother."

"Gone! Where?"

"We do not know. It must have been a week ago," said Bertha, "that I went over to see her. She had stopped coming here because one day she met Heinrich. Well, when I got there I found the house closed. The man who aids in the care of the place saw me and told me Mrs. Wells and her daughter were away on a journey. He knew nothing of their destination, nor how long they intended to be absent."

"But Herborn!" I exclaimed, "can he not conjecture whither they are bent? Surely there are not many places where they would be likely to go!"

"Herborn," said Farmer Demooth, "has never returned from the battle of Oriskany."

I was horrified at this news. The awful scene upon which I had stumbled in the gray dawn rose before me, and I shuddered at the recollection.

"You recall," pursued Miss Demooth, "Mrs. Wells' reticence in regard to their affairs. I have never heard her utter a syllable that would lead me to think she had ever had any communication with her own or her first husband's family. This, however, I do know. A brother of Mr. Wells has recently moved to some town within comparatively easy traveling distance, for not many days ago I heard Margaret speak of him and say they sometime hoped to see him. But where he has settled I have not the vaguest idea," and the sympathetic maiden, noticing my very evident distress, shook her head sadly.



Hoping to gain some crumb of comfort, I asked after my beloved's health, and was relieved to hear that she was fast recovering her strength. This news gave me considerable solace, and promising the Demooths that I would drop in to see them often I took my leave and bent my steps toward home.

Cheered though I was in a measure by the assurance of Margaret's returning health, mine was a mournful home-coming. David, good, faithful soul, had cared for everything with the greatest diligence. He alone of all the inhabitants of the vicinity had realized that the current reports in regard to my death were not true, for he well knew that my father would never have fled so suddenly, whatever his own danger, had I been dead. My reappearance seemed to cause him little surprise.

"I have been waiting and watching for you, sir," he said, after our first greetings were over, "you and your father."

"Father will never come again, David," said I, "and I have returned after a fashion that would grieve him sorely were he alive."

He seemed not to notice my last words, for he exclaimed,

"Ah, if we could only have kept your father here, Mr. Wilton, perhaps he would be spared to us now!"

"If we only might have, David! but you know how impossible it was. It was as much as ever that we restrained him as long as we did."

Then I told him of my father's end while the tears gathered in his eyes, and trickled slowly down his furrowed cheeks.

"To lie so far from his own!" said he, "the poor gentleman!"

"And his son come back a Whig!" cried I. "What would he say?"

And David, though he loved the cause, had nothing to reply. Presently I went in and greeted Christina who wept over me; then I sat down in my father's chair and gazed, vacant-eyed, into the empty fireplace.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *The Sending of Hon Yost Schuyler*

**H**AD it not been for David's assiduous kindness during the next few days I must have fallen into the slough of despondency. He insisted upon showing me minutely everything he had done during my absence. The barns were visited and the harvest surveyed. I was taken into the fields, and consulted in regard to what crops had best be planted another year. The cattle were viewed and commented upon one by one. Then David seemed to have developed a keener interest than he had ever before shown in public affairs. He would ask me if I had been at the Flatts during the morning or afternoon, as the hour chanced, and wish to know if there were any news from Fort Stanwix, or if any word had come from the relief expedition which was daily expected to arrive from Albany.

His efforts to keep me occupied and on the move were so transparent that I was amused by them, and allowed myself to be led or lured this way and that with the docility of a child. My trips to the Flatts and to the fort really proved an agreeable diversion. Captain Borring always greeted me jovially, and Colonel Weston made me feel that I was welcome whenever I chose to come. Thus nearly a week slipped away, and the morning of August 20th dawned warm and hazy. It may be surmised that during this period the thought of Margaret was well-nigh ever with me, but I had made up my mind to accept the inevitable with patience, encouraged that ere long my dream of love would come true. Somewhere, I told myself, she was safe, with the roses creeping back into her cheeks. Then I pictured how the old light of affection would leap into her eyes again when she saw me, and knew that it was indeed I returned to the ways of men. In spite of past sorrows I had times of thinking that the world was good.

The days, as I have said, glided by until

the 20th of August came. It was a Wednesday, for I have a calendar of the year before me. I had spent the early hours of the morning over some long neglected accounts, and over the rough memoranda which David had kept during my absence, and having reduced matters to something approaching comprehension, had strolled out to my seat beneath the pines. The air seemed filled with a myriad dancing golden motes; the hills beyond the valley were blurred by a faint amber veil; the locusts were practising in their sharp staccato; and not a breath of any of the great winds of heaven was astir. It was an atmosphere conducive to visions,—to visions of a happier time when the wings of peace should have spread over this fair vale of the earth; of a time when I should not dwell alone in the house which had now become mine, but when another should sit opposite me at the board, and by my side at the hearth, and here with me beneath the grateful shade of the patriarchal pines.

I was roused from my delightful forecast by the approach of a soldier who came swinging along the path across the great meadow. As he drew near the house I rose and went down to meet him.

"Mr. Aubrey, is it not?" asked he.

"Yes," I returned. "Have you any message for me?"

"I have. General Arnold has arrived, and has ordered a trial of Butler and his associates. The court-martial will sit at one o'clock, and Colonel Weston desires that you should be present."

"Tell the Colonel that I will be on hand."

The man saluted, and started toward the Flatts at the same rapid pace by which he had come. I watched him lazily till his form was no longer visible, and then went in to bid Christina prepare me an early dinner. In the action of the court-martial I had no special interest, but I was curious to see General Arnold about whom I had heard much. Just at this time he was one of the most popular leaders in the army, his intrepidity and daring having a great influence among the men.

When I entered the mess-room in the officers' quarters, where the trial was to be held, the General was not present, but he came in shortly with Colonel Weston, Colonel Willett and several other officers, and I readily recognized him from descriptions I had heard of him. He wore the uniform of his rank, which was then that of a major-general, though he had cast aside his waistcoat on account of the heat which seemed to affect him much. Although not tall, he was what might be called largely made, his features somewhat heavy, his naturally dark skin several shades darker than its wont through exposure. He was impetuous and brusque in manner, and impressed me as one who would be impatient at delay or interference, and quick to resent an injury.

Colonel Willett caught sight of me, and hastening forward shook my hand heartily, expressing his regret that we had been separated the night of our escape through the enemy's lines.

Come with me," he said, "and I will introduce you to the General,"

I followed him and soon found myself in Arnold's presence.

"Ah, Mr. Aubrey," said he, when my name was mentioned, "I have heard of you both from Colonel Willett and Colonel Weston. You should enlist, sir. The cause needs such enterprising young men."

"I will think of it," said I.

"Good!" he returned. "You ought to have a lieutenancy. If I had any influence in official circles," he continued, somewhat bitterly, "you should have one."

I thanked him for his kind intentions, though I could not see how I merited the suggested honor, and then found a seat to await the action of the tribunal which was now quickly organized. Arnold appointed Colonel Willett Judge Advocate of the court-martial, and though he himself put a few searching questions to the prisoners and witnesses, and remained an absorbed listener to the entire proceedings he took no active part in them. After the sentence of death had been pronounced upon Butler and the other most active Tories among



those captured, (a sentence which was not carried into execution, and more the pity in Butler's case!) I slipped out of the room and strolled homeward deep in meditation. General Arnold's words were already bearing fruit. Why should I not enlist? I asked myself. A call for militia had that very day been issued, as more men than had been sent from Albany were needed before an advance could with safety be made to the relief of Fort Stanwix. A better opportunity to serve the Continental cause could not possibly be offered; in fact the more I thought about it the more I was convinced that duty summoned me. By the time I reached home my mind was fully made up that I would enroll my name of the following morning, and I communicated my intention to David whom I met on emerging from the great meadow.

In an instant the faithful servant was up in arms. He assailed me with all sorts of arguments to induce me to abandon my intention.

"Let me go in your place, Mr. Wilton," said he.

"It is not the old fellows they want, David," said I, "but the young chaps who have no wives at home. Why, General Arnold himself advised me to enlist."

"Confound General Arnold!" cried he, and his anxiety was so real, and at the same time so comical, that I believe the commander himself would have laughed could he have heard himself abused.

David's tirades and pleadings, however, had no effect upon me, and although I did not say so to him I was quite as fixed in my resolution as ever. It was exactly what I needed to keep my mind occupied, to take me out of myself, and prevent me from brooding upon Margaret's absence. Perhaps, I thought, by the time the campaign is over and the fort relieved Margaret will have returned, then—well, I will own that under those circumstances the idea of an army life had not the same attractions.

No further words concerning the matter passed between David and myself that day, and I was careful not to refer to it on the following morning. It was evident that he

had constituted himself my guardian; he seemed to think it was a duty which he owed my father, and I did not wish to hurt the kind fellow's feelings when I could easily avoid it. About ten o'clock, David having gone down into the corn field, I put together a little bundle of necessaries, stole along the meadow path, and was soon well on my way to the Flatts. As I drew within sight of the fort, I saw the soldier who had brought me the summons from Colonel Weston the previous day hastening toward me.

"This meeting has saved me a trip to your home," said he.

"Ah," said I, "then you were in search of me?"

"Yes, you are wanted again."

"Indeed! I seem to be very much in demand."

We chatted together as we walked toward the fort, and I found the chief topic of interest that morning was a proclamation General Arnold had just issued as an offset to that which had been widely dis-

tributed through the valley by the emissaries of St. Leger and Sir John Johnson.

"Ecod, sir," cried the soldier, "but the General has set forth Barry St. Leger and his army in their proper light!"

And, in truth, when I came to see the manifesto I found that there was no mincing of terms. It was purposely couched in much the same language as that employed by the British leaders, and characterized the invaders as "a banditti of robbers, murderers, and traitors." Pardon was offered to all concerned provided that within ten days they laid down their arms and swore allegiance to the United States, but it was stated that if they persisted in their determination to draw upon themselves the just vengeance of heaven and the exasperated country, they must expect no mercy from either.

My conductor led me to the scene of the court-martial of the day previous, and when I entered the room a curious scene was being enacted. Seated in the straight-backed chair that had been occu-

pied by Colonel Willett during the trial of the Tories was General Arnold, his brow stern and his lips set. The fort commandant and several officers were grouped behind him; cowering upon a bench at one side was an unkempt, shock-headed man in middle life; guarded by two soldiers, one of the condemned prisoners leaned with an air of sullen indifference against the wall opposite, while in the middle of the apartment stood a grotesquely-garbed woman who was addressing the General in the most impassioned language. About her face her hair hung loosely, and ever and anon she flung it back with a toss of her head, or a wave of her hand. There was that in her countenance which held the attention, a certain magic in her eye, faded, yet suddenly kindling into unexpected fire.

Her plea seemed to be almost at an end, and there was no sign of mercy on Arnold's face.

"My God, sir," she all at once burst out, "have you no feeling that you can see a mother suffer as I am suffering? Is there

no pity in you? There is nothing that I will not do if you will but have the awful sentence unsaid."

"There is nothing you *can* do, woman," said the General, but your son can save himself if he will."

"How, sir, how?" cried the distraught mother. "Let me hear what he must do. I will be a surety that he will perform whatever task you set him. I will put myself into your custody until it is done."

"We wish no women for hostages," said Arnold coldly.

The mother turned to the man seated upon the bench.

"Will you not be surety for your brother, Nicholas?" said she beseechingly.

The fellow hesitated, glanced at his seemingly half-stupid brother as much as to say that he was not worth the trouble they were taking in his behalf, and finally gruffly signified his assent.

"There, sir, you hear; he consents," the mother exclaimed. "Now what service must my son, who is your prisoner, perform?"

“Stand forth, Hon Yost Schuyler,” said the General, leaning forward in his chair, “and listen well. You will leave this place shortly after noon to-day, and proceed in the direction of Fort Stanwix. As soon as you arrive in that vicinity you will enter the British lines and tell them, whether it be Indians, Tories, or the British themselves whom you see, that I am rapidly approaching with an overwhelming force to raise the siege. In short, it is to be your duty so to alarm our enemies in regard to our numbers and to the proximity of our army that they will retreat forthwith. In this undertaking you shall have the assistance of the Oneida chief, Singing Arrow, who is known to you. Before you arrive at Fort Stanwix he will separate from you, enter the camp at a different point, and bear witness to the truth of your tale. If you are successful, upon your return both you and your brother shall go free, but if you play us false there is no power on earth that will save your brother from the rope and the gallows.”

During Arnold's speech the prisoner had stood with eyes fixed upon the floor, his countenance absolutely void of expression. When the commander had done, however, he lifted his gaze for an instant and said:

"I will undertake what you demand."

"He will succeed, sir, never fear," cried his mother, with all a parent's confidence, but most of those present showed plainly upon their faces that they doubted the success of the *ruse de guerre*.

"It is at least worth trying, gentlemen," said Arnold, in reply to the officers' unspoken misgivings, Nicholas having been taken into custody, and Hon Yost removed from the room.

I now began to wonder why I had been summoned, and if I were to have any part in the acting of this drama, to the prologue of which I had been a witness.



## CHAPTER XVII

### *How the Ruse de Guerre Succeeded*

THE officers were beginning to leave when Colonel Willet came quickly toward where I was seated.

"You see," I said, rising as he drew near, "that I have given ear to the General's admonition. I have come to enlist."

"You can do far more important service outside the ranks than in them," said he, "if you are willing to undertake what the General has in mind."

"What is that?"

"Step this way, and he will tell you himself."

I glanced toward Arnold, and remarked that he was awaiting us.

"I am glad you are here, Mr. Aubrey," he exclaimed cordially. "You must have anticipated my messenger. I noticed you when you entered the room."

"Yes," I answered, "I was but a few hundred yards from the fort when I received your summons. I was on my way to enlist, as I just told Colonel Willett."

The General was evidently pleased at this announcement.

"In that case," said he, "I hope I can prevail upon you to accept a somewhat delicate and dangerous mission. You heard my words to that seemingly thick-headed Tory yonder? Mark you, the fellow is keener witted than he appears to be! Well, what I desire is this,—a man who will accompany Hon Yost Schuyler, see that he enters the British encampment, then, lying in wait till night if need be, endeavor to get through the lines into the fort and deliver a message to Colonel Gansevoort. You know the ground,—that is why I have appealed to you before disclosing my wish to any other. You also know the risks to be run. Will you make the attempt?"

"I will," said I, without an instant's hesitation, greatly flattered by the confidence he was imposing in me.

"Good!" cried he, rubbing his hands with satisfaction. "Excellent! Be prepared to start as soon as you have had your dinner. I will give you your final instructions just before you leave. The intervening time is at your disposal."

He left us in the best of humors, and having received Colonel Willett's congratulations on my prompt agreement to undertake the perilous mission, and accepted an invitation to dine at his table, I went out with the intention of calling on the Demooths. It was two days since I had been at their house, and before starting upon so hazardous an enterprise I wished to make sure that by no chance a missive from Margaret had been received by Bertha Demooth.

So far as news was concerned I gained no satisfaction from my call. Bidding the Demooths adieu with the mystifying remark that I would report to John that all was well with them, I sauntered on toward Margaret's home. Here so depressing a quiet reigned, that I was sorry I had visited

the place, and hastened back to the fort and the society of Captain Borring to keep my spirits from drooping. This, of all times, was the occasion for avoiding the devil of low-heartedness.

Dinner over, I was summoned into the presence of General Arnold.

"You are to tell Colonel Gansevoort," said he, "that I shall move to his relief as soon as my forces are swelled to a size sufficient to warrant my doing so. This, I have every reason to believe, will be in a few days. Bid him not lose courage, for if I discover from Indian spies, who are constantly on the watch, that he is in immediate danger, I will hasten to his assistance at once, venturesome as such a course would be. A bold man knows when to be cautious, so I need not warn you, nor will I venture to offer any suggestions in regard to your plan of procedure. You can best shape that for yourself. I have nothing more to say, save to wish you every success."

He gave me his hand, then I went out to

find my companions. They were awaiting me by the fort gateway, and Colonel Willet, Captain Borring and several others were standing by to bid me God-speed.

It was a cool day for August. A gusty wind out of the northwest was blowing among the hills, ever and anon swooping down into the valley to crisp the river reaches and cause a deep murmur in the forest.

To give color to the tale which he was to tell in regard to his escape from the hands of the Continentals, Hon Yost's clothes had, in a number of places, been perforated by bullets. He was little inclined to talk at first, and as the Indian had but small knowledge of English the early hours of our journey were passed in silence, save for an occasional interchange of comments in the Indian tongue between my two companions. Toward mid-afternoon, however, when I proposed that we should pause for a smoke (there was no need for especial haste, as the morning of the day following was the time Hon Yost had been

ordered to try his ruse), the Tory shed in a measure his sullenness and taciturnity, and surprised me by his shrewdness. Under a most unprepossessing exterior (the man at times having the air of one half-witted) was hidden a vast deal of keen common sense. As for his knowledge of the woods, of beast and bird, of signs in the sky, it was every whit as intimate as that of the Indian.

We lay that night in a sheltered hollow below the road where the force of the wind, which was still blowing, did not reach us. We were now within ten miles of Fort Stanwix, and as I had no knowledge how close a watch the British might be keeping, I counselled the greatest caution in our forward movements. Accordingly the next morning, after we had passed the gruesome battle-field of Oriskany, we struck down into the bottom lands and followed more closely the course of the river. By ten o'clock we were within a mile of the fort. Here Hon Yost and the Indian proposed parting company, and as I had not indicated to them just what my purpose was they

looked at me askance as much as to say — you can do what you please. There had been all the time in their manner toward me a touch of resentment, as though they felt that I was with them to spy upon their movements, and I could see that they were glad that the hour had come when they thought they were to be rid of me.

Singing Arrow with a grunt and a nod to the Tory, and the semblance of a grin at me, took himself off into the thicket on the right, while Hon Yost turned his back upon me, and moved forward in the direction we had been pursuing. Without comment I followed him. We had proceeded perhaps two hundred yards in this fashion, when suddenly he wheeled upon me.

“Hell’s fire!” he broke out, “how long am I to have you dogging my steps? If it were n’t for the old woman and that brother o’ mine back there at Fort Dayton I’d ’ave slit your pretty wizzard for you long ago, and, by God, if you don’t sheer off on another trail I’ll do it anyhow.”

I had no desire to exasperate the man,

and as I descried a mound hard by where grew a tall hemlock which I was aware must command a wide sweep of country, I replied without the least show of resentment,

"I'm very happy to oblige you. I certainly have no wish to burden you with my society."

This said, I sat down upon a fallen tree. He was at loss how to take my cool way of treating his outburst, growled out something beneath his breath, eyed me for a brief space doubtfully, and finally left me to myself in the stillness of the open wood. I watched him disappear, waited perhaps ten minutes, and then sought the hemlock which I hastened to climb. It was clear enough that Hon Yost was bent upon seeking the encampment of the British, with what purpose remained to be seen.

As I had fancied, my post of vantage, while it did not afford a view of the fort itself, gave me a chance to observe much of the cleared land about it, and I remained perched in the tree top until I



had marked the Tory cross one of the meadow spaces far ahead, and noted that his steps were still bent in the direction of the carrying-place. As I descended to the ground I heard the loud booming of guns, a sound that very shortly increased in volume so that I made up my mind a general artillery engagement must be in progress. I now resolved to put myself into a position to carry out my own plan when the right hour should arrive. What I intended to do was simple. I had thought it all out as I lay listening to the sougling of the wind the night before. I would cross the river, strike out in a slightly north-easterly direction through the dense forest on the opposite shore, emerge upon the Mohawk (which here takes a wide bend) above the British earthworks on one hand and the Indian encampment on the other, then, when night fell, float down with a log, as I had done previously, land opposite the sally-port, and through it gain entrance to the fort.

I resolved to run no risk of being ob-

served, and so instead of crossing the river at a point near at hand, I retraced my steps for half a mile, removed my clothes, tied them to a pole, and without much difficulty gained the other shore. While I was drying myself in the sun I began to feel drowsy, and knowing that the whole day was before me I resolved to rest for a few hours. Accordingly after I had dressed and refreshed myself with the simple fare with which I had been provided, I found a dry spot in the long marsh grass, stretched myself out, and was soon drifting across the sea of dreams. It was mid-after-noon when I wakened, and I made haste to bestir myself. The course which I must pursue to reach the desired point led me through a low woodland where the sunlight never penetrated. It was boggy under foot; vines were festooned from bough to bough; creepers covered the fallen logs and rioted upon the frequent hummocks; and there were pools hidden by a viscid coating of green lying in wait for the unwary. It was the haunt of strange birds, of the

panther and the bear, and of many deadly crawling things.

I was fortunate in having a compass in my pocket so I had no fear of losing myself in the waste. My progress, however, was of necessity slow, and I calculated that it would take me at least an hour and a half to penetrate to the river. I was picking my way with great care, testing the ground at nearly every step with a long staff I had cut before venturing to advance, when on a sudden I was aware that there was some one close at hand, so near indeed that there was hardly time for concealment. I tried to force myself in among the branches of a low cedar, but ere I had succeeded in so doing the boughs parted, and the unknown and I stood face to face.

Amazement held me speechless. Emaciated and haggard-eyed, his clothes dripping and mud-dabbled, his hair hanging in matted elf-locks,—in this deplorable condition though he was, I recognized the man instantly. It was Heinrich Herborn. Instead of being dead as was supposed, he had been

1 taken prisoner at the battle of Oriskany (as I learned presently), and had just escaped.

The light where we were standing was dim, and as he gazed at me, half concealed by the cedar branches, I saw a fit of shivering seize him. It was as though he was in the grip of an ague.

"In God's name," cried he, in a hollow voice, "what man are you?"

"I am that one," said I, "whom you would have for an enemy against his will."

"Impossible!" he ejaculated, "Wilton Aubrey must have a brother, or a double!"

"He has neither to my knowledge," said I, "and I am Wilton Aubrey."

"Not unless the age of miracles has returned," he exclaimed, still but half convinced. "How can I believe you are he when his drowning cries are yet ringing in my ears!"

"My dear Herborn," said I, laughing, "you never heard his drowning cries, for while you were listening to what you supposed were those sounds he was lying concealed beneath the bank not a dozen feet from where you were standing."

He now came forward with extended hand.

"Aubrey," said he, "I'm my own man again!"

"The past is past," said I, "and I don't harbor the slightest grudge for what happened."

"Nor I," he returned, with a wan smile; "you gave me a pretty severe handling that night in front of Bellinger's store, you know." He staggered and would have fallen had I not steadied him.

"Why, man," I cried, "what is it?"

"I'm exhausted," he answered weakly, "I've had little to eat for days."

I pulled from my pocket the remainder of my provender, and when he had eaten this, and had taken a good pull from my flask he declared that he was ready for anything.

"There is no great haste," said I, "suppose we talk a bit before we go on."

"Agreed. I confess I'm vastly curious to know what, in heaven's name, you are doing in this infernal waste."

"I shall be most delighted to tell you after you have answered one question."

"You have but to put it to me."

At this I informed him of the sudden departure of his mother and sister from the Flatts, and told him that they had left no clue in regard to their destination.

"Can you imagine where they have gone?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered gloomily, realizing that he was indirectly the cause of their departure. "Without doubt it is to Albany, for a brother of my step-father has very recently settled there, coming from Rawdon in the Carolinas."

My heart gave a great bound of joy at this news.

"Will you go to Albany with me after I have accomplished my mission here?" I said eagerly. "I think we can set everything to rights now."

"I will go with you gladly," he answered.

I then revealed to him what I had been sent to do, and related to him incidentally some of my experiences since the memor-

able night by the Slanting Waters. He in his turn spoke of his capture and captivity, and then went on to tell me of his escape.

"I had quite abandoned all hope of getting away," he said, "we were so closely guarded, and had concluded that I was fated to endure a long term of confinement at Montreal or Quebec, unless in the meantime the Indians became unruly and massacred all the prisoners, when about an hour ago there was a sudden commotion in camp. Officers and men went rushing to and fro, the Indians set up a great shouting and hooting, in fact a general confusion prevailed. Very soon it became evident that a retreat had been ordered."

"A retreat!" I cried, in exultation, "then General Arnold's ruse has succeeded!"

"I believe it has," said Heinrich. "Well, in the hubbub our guard grew careless, and as we were being marched from the spot where we had been kept in bonds I managed to slip out of the lines into the adjoining underbrush. Once in the wood I ran at the top of my speed toward the river.

My absence was soon discovered and the chase was hot, but I was fortunate enough to escape the bullets sent after me, gained this side of the stream, and behold, here I am!"

"But there are two Indian encampments on this bank!" I exclaimed.

"I saw no Indians."

"Then they must have withdrawn. Come, let's hasten forward and see!"

Herborn caught some of my spirit, and away we went at a reckless pace, leaping from log to log, plunging through thickets, tripping, panting, perspiring, until we emerged in a little open space on the river bank. Beyond the stream and the marsh through which I had threaded my way the evening I had vainly tried to gain entrance to the fort, on the high ground where the batteries of St. Leger were located, we could decry several soldiers making frantic efforts to dismount a cannon.

"It is true!" I cried, in glee, "they are raising the siege!"



Along the bank of the river we pressed to where the Indians had bivouaced, to find only the smouldering remains of their camp-fires.

"A canoe," said I, "perhaps we can find a canoe!"

Presently a shout from Herborn told me that he had succeeded. We sprang in and my companion grasped the paddle. A few strokes and we were in mid-stream. Before we could land, outcries from Sir John Johnson's intrenchments informed us that we had been seen. About the same time we heard shouts of encouragement from the fort, for I had been waving my handkerchief lustily. A number of shots were fired, but none of the bullets came near us. We leaped ashore, and, stooping low, ran swiftly in the direction of the sally-port where, in a few seconds, we were safe.

"The British are retreating!" cried I, addressing the first officer whom we met.

"Retreating!" echoed he incredulously.

"Yes, the Indians have already broken camp yonder beyond the river."

He rushed off to the ramparts, while I hailed a private soldier and bade him conduct me to Colonel Gansevoort. Although the seeming success of the General's ruse rendered my report unnecessary, I felt it my duty to pay my respects to the commandant, and, moreover, had we not news infinitely more welcome than that which I had set out to convey? My interview with Colonel Gansevoort off my mind there would remain nothing of public import for me to contemplate, and I should be left free to dwell upon my visions of future bliss.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *The Quest for Margaret*

An hour after our arrival, Colonel Gansevoort made bold to dispatch a small force to ascertain, if possible, to what extent the enemy had withdrawn. Musket and cannon alike had been for some time silent, and upon the borders of the woods no Indians had been seen, yet it might be that St. Leger in turn was practicing a clever bit of stratagem, and the commandant did not deem it wise to take any chances of falling into a trap. Very soon, however, the scouts brought the information that the entire British camp was deserted, and that the foe, such was their haste, had left behind them their tents, a large portion of their provisions, their artillery, their ammunition, and nearly their entire camp equipage.

An expedition was at once organized to harass the rear of the retreating army, but with such precipitation had St. Leger and

his savage allies fled that only a few stragglers were captured. A large quantity of spoil, however, was taken, for the soldiers in their panic had cast aside everything that in the least encumbered their movements.

One of the prisoners was called before Colonel Gansevoort, and from him we learned in detail how the retreat had been caused.

"You see, sir, it was like this," said the fellow, who was a Canadian militia-man. "About noon there came a man into the Indian camp who told how he had just escaped from imprisonment at the risk of his life, indeed, his clothes were all shot full of bullet holes for I saw them myself afterward. He also related how he had traveled at the top of his speed all night for the purpose of warning us of the approach of an overwhelming force of Continentals under General Arnold. When questioned in regard to the number of those approaching, he answered by pointing to the leaves upon the trees. The chiefs, who were dis-

satisfied with the slowness of the siege, and were still sore over their losses at the battle that was fought two weeks and more since, had just been holding a pow-wow, and were greatly stirred up over the tidings. They fell to discussing the matter, and while thus engaged an Indian arrived confirming what the white man, who turned out to be a Mohawk Valley Tory, had stated. A rumor of the Tory's report spread through the camp, and came to the ears of St. Leger and Sir John Johnson. It is said they called a council of war at which they interrogated the bearer of the news, and while this council was in progress there arose an outcry somewhere in the camp, "*they are coming! they are coming!*" I cannot swear if this be true, but I know that orders for retreat were suddenly given, and that we poor fellows who were commanded to cover the rear wished we were well out of it, for believe me, sir, we had cause to fear the savages who were supposed to be our friends quite as much as we had the foe that was reported to be hard upon us."

Early in the evening Hon Yost himself arrived at the fort, having accompanied the discomfited British as far as the mouth of Wood Creek and then deserted, but from him we were able to extract little additional information. The main fact, however, remained. General Arnold's ruse had succeeded, one part of the carefully planned scheme of the British ministry had been foiled, and Burgoyne would look in vain for aid from St. Leger, assistance upon which he had counted so much.

My anxiety was now at an end, and it was in the blithest mood that I set out for the Flatts on the following morning in company with Heinrich, John Demooth, and a messenger whom Colonel Gansevoort was dispatching to General Arnold. We encountered the General toward the middle of the afternoon, he having learned that St. Leger had advanced his trenches to within two hundred yards of the fort, and having in consequence decided to push forward with what men were available and risk an engagement rather than have the

fort fall without having made an effort for its relief. Arnold was naturally rejoiced at the news we brought him, and at once ordered nine hundred men to hurry forward by a forced march, in the hope of joining with some of the garrison and giving active pursuit to the fleeing British. Although my endeavors to aid the cause had been of no material assistance, the General was good enough to compliment me highly, and reverted to the lieutenancy he had mentioned at our first meeting, saying he should not forget my name when he made his report to General Gates who had recently superseded General Schuyler in command of the army of the north. Later when the dark days came, and men on all sides were execrating Arnold's name, as, indeed, was no more than natural and just, I could but feel the sincerest pity and regret that so brave and capable a soldier, one who inspired such courage and confidence among the men, should have dugged for himself so deep a pit of ignominy and shame.

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Certainly the skies were beginning to look fair for me once more, and I had good cause to feel elated. Was I not soon to see the one who had grown dearer and yet more dear through the lengthening days of our separation, and did I not behold opening before me, should I choose to follow it, a career in the service of freedom and of the land which I called my own?

The evening was well advanced when we reached the Flatts, three happy yet footsore wayfarers. David made a great to-do over my return, and forebore to upbraid me for the manner in which I had left him, which, when I considered his natural inclinations, appeared to me remarkably considerate. I had insisted that Heinrich accompany me home, and we spent the day following our return in taking a much needed rest, and in making preparations for our Albany journey. Not desiring to pain David a second time, I confided to him for what purpose we were going, and was both amused and caused to feel a trifle foolish by having him bestow his blessing upon me.



Of our experiences upon the road there is little to tell. We were occasionally halted by some good patriot, anxious to learn if we had any news in regard to the success of Arnold's mission, and were delayed a considerable time the second day by the violent bluster of a storm which put the highway in a most deplorable condition. Not until toward noon of the third day, after having crossed a most desolate and sandy waste of upland, did we perceive that we were approaching Albany. Now the terror of Burgoyne's threatened invasion began to be apparent for we encountered whole households bearing with them, upon huge farm wagons, all their possessions that it was possible to carry. There were dogged, gaunt-eyed men driving herds of cattle, dejected women riding astride, children afoot or clinging behind their parents,—in short it was a spectacle to stir both pity and indignation,—pity for the wretched folk forced to leave their homes, and indignation against the unfeeling invaders.

I foresaw that the town was likely to be much crowded, and began to fear that we might find difficulty in obtaining lodgings. On applying, however, to Mr. Robert Lewis who kept the chief inn, situated upon the southeastern corner of State Street at its junction with Pearl, we were much gratified to discover that he could favor us with a little room high under the sharp gable of the roof, and also, although his own stable was full, that he could manage to see our horses were well provided.

Having refreshed ourselves with a draught of ale, for the morning had been wearisome and the sand had irritated our throats, we bore our belongings to our diminutive apartment and fell to making ourselves presentable. The clatter of dishes rang through the long, low dining-room as we entered, and with this noise rose the hurly-burly of many men's voices, for, save for the waiting-maids, there was not a woman in the place. We were assigned to a table where a somewhat thin-faced, yet kindly-eyed man in clerical black, with a

great white choker, was just finishing his meat, and as he sat directly opposite we naturally fell into speech with him. His manner of talk was most attractive, and when he learned we were from the Flatts he began plying us with eager questions, news of St. Leger's flight having come forward by special messenger the day previous. So familiar did he seem with all the country in the neighborhood of my home, and so keen an interest did he betray in everything we had to relate, that when he went from the room I turned to the officer upon my right, who had taken a slight part in our conversation, and inquired:

"Can you tell me who that gentleman may be?"

"It is said that he is Samuel Kirkland, the missionary," was the reply, and then I knew that I had been speaking with the man who had worked such marvels among the Indians, to whose influence more than that of any other was due the fact that the entire Six Nations had not gone upon the war path at the bidding of the British.

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We picked up a great budget of gossip before we quitted the table, for the whole room hummed with it. We learned that the islands at the mouth of the Mohawk (Van Schaick's Island and Haval Island), had been intrenched, that approaches to the ford at Half Moon Point had been fortified, and that the appointed meeting of the first New York Legislature at Kingston on September 1st had moved the militia to action, and they were beginning to gather in a most gratifying way.

The stir at Lewis' Tavern was a reproduction in little of the bustle in the streets of the town, which was at this time the sixth or seventh in size in the country. There was a great hurrying to and fro of soldiers on their way to the front, of market-men and peripatetic venders called forth by the unusual crowd and making a loud to-do over their wares; and, moreover, there was a vast press of country folk, some from the immediate vicinity who had come to trade, but more from the fugitive class who had all their time upon their hands, and were

wandering up and down from mere idle curiosity.

It was into this human ebb and flow that Heinrich and I adventured after standing for a space among the guests of the inn about the street doorway, and it was now for the first time that I began to wonder if, after all, our errand was going to prove such an easy one. During our journey I had comforted myself with the thought, "once we are in Albany, the rest will be but a trifling affair." Although Herborn had stated at the outset that he was not aware either in what part of the town Philip Wells (Margaret's uncle) had taken up his abode, or upon what business venture he had embarked, it had not occurred to me but that it would be a comparatively easy thing to get trace of him. Now our quest assumed a decidedly different aspect. I had not counted upon this great influx of strangers, and realized that if our inquiries at some of the principal shops and at the place for the delivery of the mails should turn out to be of no avail, we should be straightway cast into a maze of difficulties.

Our landlord, whom I was at the outset careful to question, could give me no information. There had been many newcomers of late, he remarked.

I communicated none of my misgivings to Heinrich, however, seeing that he was lost in wonder and admiration at the sights, he having never before journeyed further than Johnstown.

"It will be time enough to counsel with him," I said to myself, "should our inquiries come to naught."

I took upon myself the part of acting as spokesman, and having ascertained where the mails were given forth, we made our way thither, but small satisfaction did we get.

Yes, the man in charge could recall that occasional letters had come for a Mr. Philip Wells during the past month, but he had no notion where the gentleman lived, whether in the town, in its outskirts, or haply somewhere in the surrounding country.

Here was an entirely new suggestion

that added to my gathering perplexities. The outskirts of the town! the surrounding country! Forsooth, our search was going to be no holiday sport, if these outlying districts were perforce to be added to the area we must cover. Our afternoon proved to be both vexatious and wearisome, and, moreover, productive of no results. To all sorts of merchants we went, meeting now with courteous and now with gruff responses, but never gaining the clue we sought. Some had heard the name, some fancied they had dealings with the person we were inquiring for, but no one knew where he was to be found, nor could any one give a satisfactory description of his appearance.

"Come," I said to Heinrich, "we will go to the river and rest for a while, and see if we can decide what had best be done."

To this proposal he readily assented, saying he did not know what had got into his legs they felt so uncommonly weary.

"'Tis the streets of the town, man," I remarked, with a laugh. "This plodding

up and down over hard pavements little agrees with one accustomed to the spring of the turf on the side of a country highway."

There was considerable activity about the quays, the loading of sloops with stores for the army being in progress. We found a comparatively quiet spot and, having perched upon a huge bale containing I know not what, scanned for some time in silence the placid reaches of the river that shimmered with the deepening gold of late afternoon.

"I confess," said Heinrich at length, "this is not exactly what I looked forward to. It seemed to me when you proposed the thing, and whenever I have since thought of it, that it would be the very easiest matter imaginable to find my mother and sister. I now realize that I judged Albany by the Flatts and by the settlements up the valley, but you who have been more in the world, I should think you would have foreseen the difficulties we were likely to encounter."



"Doubtless," I returned, "I overlooked them, or gave them little heed, in the joy of discovering whither your sister and mother had gone. When we stepped into the streets this afternoon I knew we had been over-confident."

"Well, we can make a house to house inquiry," this dubiously, with a tired glance at the expanse over which the town stretched.

"Yes," I assented, with scarcely less enthusiasm than he had shown, "but I have about come to the conclusion that it is in the outskirts, or in the immediately adjoining country, we must search."

"Why so?"

"I can hardly say. It is simply an impression that has been growing on me. Assuredly some of the tradesmen we have questioned would be able to tell us more if Mr. Wells has been a resident of Albany a month and longer."

"Not if he has run no bills, as is quite possible. Why should they even know his name?"

This putting of the case was reasonable, and I had no reply to make.

"There is no newspaper now published here, so we cannot advertise," said I, "but there is certainly a town-crier. We might have recourse to him."

"Well, suppose we do on the morrow," answered Heinrich.

Having come to this agreement, we lapsed into a silent contemplation of the shipping and the river, and presently made our way slowly back to the inn.

## CHAPTER XIX

### *The Gardineer Place*

I cannot say what prompted me, but I arrayed myself with special care that evening. Perhaps it was the vain hope that I might encounter Margaret among the promenaders whom I knew would be likely to gather in State Street when the sun had dipped low. I donned my fine velure silk waistcoat which my dear mother had once presented to me at Christmastide, my best knee and shoe buckles, and a cravat which I had not worn since the days when Hamilton and I used to disport ourselves upon the Battery at the sunset flush when May was in the air. Heinrich flung much banter at me, but I smiled at him good-humoredly, for with the putting on of my gay attire somehow I sloughed the discouraging experiences of the afternoon, and regained, at least in part, my former buoyancy.

We had supped well, and were sitting where we could watch the incoming and

outgoing frequenters of the tavern when we marked our host making his way toward us.

"A fair evening to you, sirs," he said, as he approached. "Did you tell me that the gentleman of whom you were in search had come hither from the South?"

"Yes, yes," I cried excitedly, believing that at last we were about to hear something that would put us on the right track.

"I ask," said the landlord, "because a new-comer to town has just been here who occasionally drops in for a draught of my port. I do not know what his name is, but I recall having heard him say that he had lived in the Carolinas, and had removed to the North to escape Tory persecution."

"I believe it is the man!" I exclaimed, "Where is he now?"

"He came on horseback, and has just ridden away. If I mistake not, it is he who has purchased the Gardineer place which is beyond General Schuyler's on the extension of Pearl Street."

"He has just ridden away, you say?"

"Yes, but he must be still in sight. Perhaps I can point him out to you."

We accompanied Mr. Lewis to the door, and then to the street corner.

"Yonder he is!" said the landlord, with a wave of his hand toward a rapidly disappearing figure. "If you think there is any likelihood that he is the man you are seeking, you have but to follow this road into the country until you come to a house upon your right set well back amid a group of maples. That is the Gardineer place, and there I think you will find him."

"Come!" I cried to Herborn, whose weariness of the afternoon was now suddenly forgotten, and who kept pace uncomplainingly with my rapid stride.

The clock in the English church in State Street was just striking seven, and there was still half an hour before twilight would begin to deepen. For the gay dames in their calashes and buffonts hasting towards State Street to display their finery I had never an eye. Not for an instant did I suffer my glance to rove from the rider

swinging on ahead. Doubtless the good burghers and their families who were enjoying the coolness of eve, seated upon either side of their doorways, as is their custom, marvelled to see such indifference and such unwonted haste. Something within me cried out that at last we had hit upon the true trail, and I seemed to feel myself transfigured. A waft of the old sensation comes back to me as I write, and my blood sings the song of love and youth. What mattered the long parting, the yearning, the fears, the heart-ache? Every sad emotion was shed as a cast-off garment, and joy was my sole raiment.

The horseman finally grew to be a faint figure, occasionally glimpsed and then hidden from the sight. We had sometime since left behind the houses of the town and also a mansion of considerable stateliness, which I fancied must be General Schuyler's, and presently the rider was wholly lost to view. Up to this point Heinrich and I had exchanged no word. Now we slackened our steps simultaneously,

for it was clear that we were drawing near what the inn-keeper had called the Gardineer place.

"How shall we manage it?" said Heinrich. "I don't wish to take the lead, for I might chance to encounter Margaret, and I should prefer not to have her see me until she knows you are alive. Yet the sudden sight of you might seriously shock her—"

"I'll take the risk," said I, interrupting him. "You know 'tis regarded as a common truth that joy does not kill, and, after all, there is but small probability that she will be the first person I shall meet."

So it was settled that I was to go forward in advance, and that Heinrich was to follow, after giving me an opportunity to make myself known. It will be noticed that both of us assumed we had found the dwelling-place of Philip Wells.

We soon reached the entrance gate, and, leaving Heinrich, I stepped briskly along the drive. Behind the trees in the rear of, and surrounding, the substantial brick man-

sion lingered the embers of a glowing sunset, but the invading shadows were creeping up from beyond the river, and in the caressing breeze there was a soft presage of night.

As I neared the house I caught the murmur of voices, so I chose the sward for a path, and thus was able to approach silent-footed. Several shrubs obscured the porch and the main doorway, and, swiftly gaining the shelter of a syringa clump, I peered out. Not many yards distant three women were seated, two upon a rustic seat, the third half reclining upon some cushions cast on the grass—and the third was Margaret!

I caught my breath at the sight of her all clad in white, with a bit of black velvet at her throat and a flower upon her breast; then I shut my eyes, to open them again in an instant, half fearing that the vision should prove a dream. Although I had in all surety expected to find her, I had not anticipated coming upon her in just this way. The suddenness of it gave me a thrill that was surpassingly sweet.



While I stood transfixed, my gaze riveted upon my beloved's face, one of the elder women rose, taking my attention for a moment. "She must be Mrs. Philip Wells," I said to myself, for her companion was Margaret's mother.

"I think we had best be going within," she remarked, "the evening grows damp."

"Oh, must we yet?" exclaimed Margaret. "It is so lovely here!"

You can stay for a little, if you like, dear," said her mother, who had risen, "but I think with your aunt that she and I had better seek the shelter of the house."

They moved toward the steps, and soon disappeared in the dusk of the hallway.

"Surely," mused I, "if there is such a thing as the intervention of fate, here is a rare example of its workings," for on the instant that Margaret's mother and aunt quitted the scene I had made up my mind what I would do.

There was a whistling wood-thrush note, uttered at the edge of eve, which Margaret and I had several times practised together

when we had strolled down a laneway in the rear of the Demooth's as far as the forest's verge. Of this I determined to make use. Would not my beloved think it strange to hear it so near at hand, and so close to a habitation? Would not the sound of it kindle recollection, and stir in her brain the thought that perhaps by some unaccountable magic it came from human lips, from my lips?

Softly at first, then more sharply and clearly I gave the whistling call. Even as I hoped, she started, shuddered a little, and put her hand to her heart. Again I tried the note, and she was upon her feet, her eyes straining toward the bush behind which I was hidden, her slender figure tense, as though at the next instant she would spring toward me. Once more the call, imperfect indeed, and yet perfect, for it wrought my desire.

"Wilton! Wilton!" she cried, and ah! the wedded joy and doubt and wonder in that cry!

I stepped into full view and held out my

arms. Did she hesitate? Did it come into her mind that I was some fateful apparition risen to harrow her? Not so, and I have since told her that it was all due to the pink of my velure waistcoat, which must have been visible and given her assurance, for no one could imagine such a crowning absurdity as a ghost in pink velure. It was the veriest fraction of time before I had her in my embrace, before our lips met, before she was laughing and crying over me, and looking me up and down as though to make quite sure in my supposed excursion to the country of departed souls I had not left behind a leg or an arm.

Two startled women now appeared upon the porch of the house, while a rotund little man in a buff coat and a disarranged peruke pushed by them and began to descend the steps.

"It's Wilton, it's Wilton, come back to life!" cried Margaret, seizing me by the arm and dragging me forward. And then there arose such a chorus of cries, such a series of exclamations as I had never be-

fore heard, and hope never again to be forced to listen to. Upon me was poured a tumbling torrent of questions, and it was the greatest relief when I caught sight of Heinrich standing not far away, and drew attention from myself by pointing him out to Margaret. The sweet girl ran toward him with both hands outstretched.

"It has all been a bad dream, brother," she said, "but now it is morning again," and she kissed him fondly.

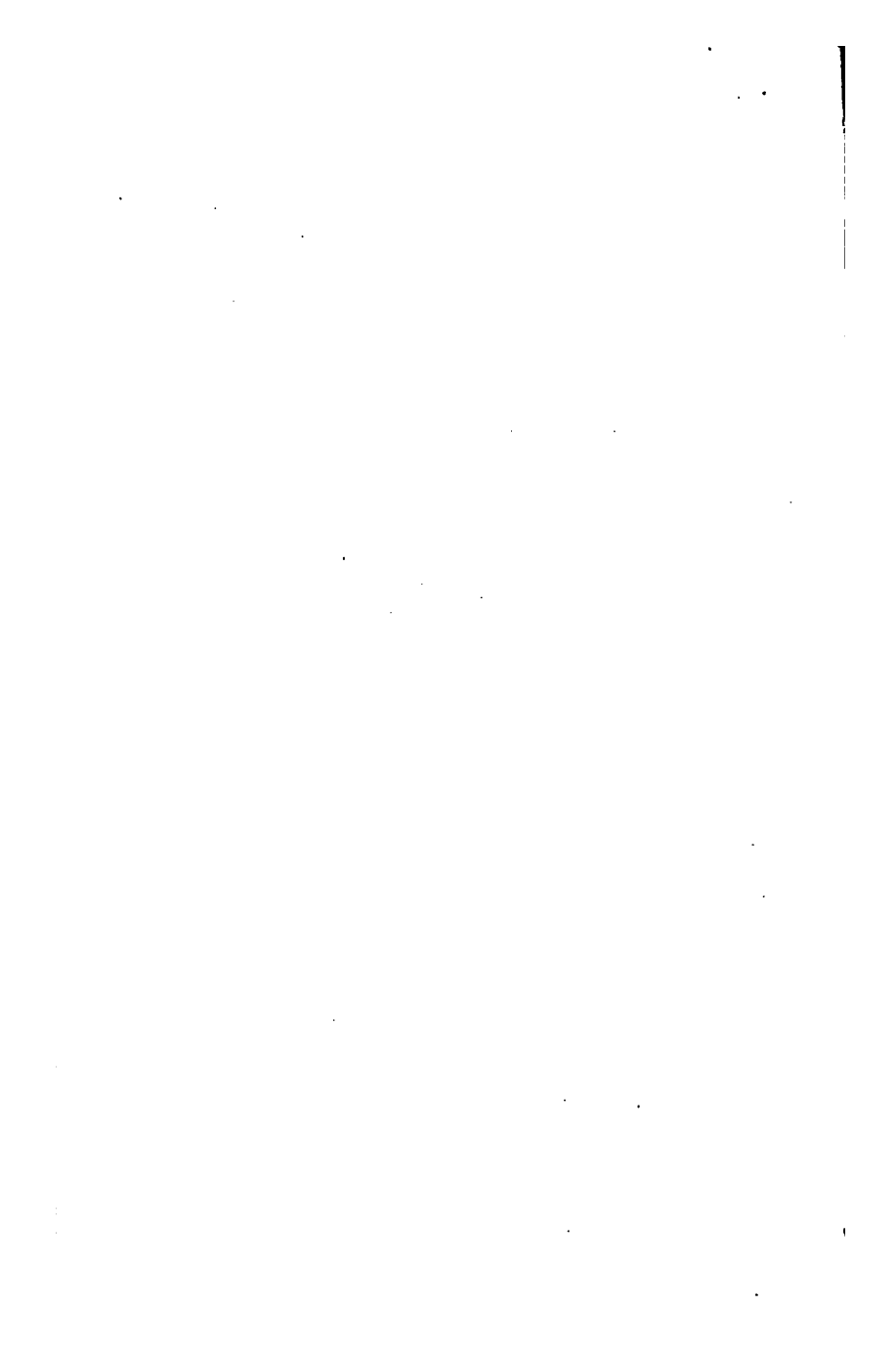
Then we went merrily into the house, Margaret clinging to me, lest I should somehow be spirited from her sight. When my story had been told, Mr. Wells left us for a space to reappear presently with a brimming bowl, having mixed his choicest posset. Our glasses were filled, and I arose, waiting for the host to speak.

"A toast!" he cried, beaming upon us all,— "the health and happiness of a dear maiden whom I need not name!"

And with a full heart I pledged her in whose eyes I saw shining a radiant light

which, since that hour, has never failed to be to me an inspiration, a solace, and a guide.

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